

HOW A LOCAL CHURCH BECOMES A
GLOBALLY CONNECTED CHURCH
IN DESTINY LEADERS, LIFELINKS INTERNATIONAL,
AND OTHER NETWORKS OF CHURCHES

A THESIS-PROJECT
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To my family. I am who I am because of your prayer and encouragement.

Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17 that the Body of Christ would be one, as they are one, so that the world would know that the Father sent the Son. According to Jesus's prayer, the foundation of the world understanding that the Father so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, is connection and unity between each part of the Global Church.

This thesis-project is intended to identify how a local church can become a more globally connected church. The churches studied were affiliated with Destiny Leaders, Lifelinks International, and other networks of churches around the world. Chapter 1 is a general overview of this thesis-project. Chapter 2 gives the theological framework for why each local church must be connected to the global church. Chapter 3 shows how various other works informed the writing of this project. Chapter 4 details the project design. Chapter 5 reveals the findings of how a local church becomes a more globally connected church.

CHAPTER 1

GLOBALLY CONNECTED

Local church... When those words broach the mind of one living in today's generation, usually one's thoughts go to the church down the street from where he or she grew up, or to the church he or she is currently attending. That church is sometimes very effective in its own community, sometimes not. That church is sometimes very effective in the surrounding communities and may even be one of the few to have an impact on people from other cultures and other nations, but usually it's not. Often that local church is busy taking care of its local needs and the needs of the local community in which it was planted, and rightfully so; this is a major part of the call of the local church. Afterall, *local* is in the name. Still, it is vital to realize that some local churches have become so overly concerned with the *local* aspects of their existence that they have neglected the *global* aspects of the Church.¹ Every local church *must* be meaningfully connected to the Global Church.

This discussion brings up an important question: How can a local church become a globally connected church? That is the main problem addressed in this thesis. To find how a local church becomes a globally connected church, I had to first identify some globally connected churches. When these globally connected churches were properly identified, I could then study them and identify the overarching principles to help a local church become more globally connected.

¹ I also believe that a few churches have become so overly concerned with the global aspect of their call that they have neglected to properly minister to and serve the local community in which they were planted.

I am a church planter who planted a church through the Association of Related Churches. This is a large network of thousands of churches across the United States and the Globe. I am also a member of the Destiny Leadership Network of Churches and am associated with Lifelinks International, the Go Deep Grace international network of pastors and ministers, and other smaller networks of churches both globally and in and around the city of Clearwater, Florida. These relational connections were where I began to search for strong globally connected churches from which to learn.

It has been approximately seven years since the start of this journey to understand how a local church becomes a globally connected church. The journey has taken many twists and turns including moving across the country to plant a church, then putting into practice some of the principles I was learning through this study to help my church plant become more globally connected. The following story is not my research, but it is an introduction to how putting into practice the principles I learned from studying 46 lead pastors of 46 local churches from multiple contexts and nations could impact your life and the life of your local church.

In May of 2022, at 01:00 A.M., Pakistan time, our flight had just touched down in Lahore, and we were waiting nervously in a long line of travelers in the customs area to see if our visas on arrival would be approved or denied. We knew about Pakistan's reputation as a country notorious for its harsh laws regarding evangelism. So our anxiety shot up when a uniformed customs officer herded our group away from the usual line of normal travelers into a back room of the airport, which we naturally worried was the location where the authorities dealt with problem cases. But surprisingly, without questioning or hesitation, the back-room customs officer simply smiled and

stamped our paperwork as approved. As he handed us the official acceptance into his country, I felt a wave of relief and thanked Jesus. This mission, a mission resulting from years of prayer and a lifetime of preparation, was going to happen.

Seven years before, I was at home either scrolling through some social media or watching random online videos, when I came across a video about the nation of Pakistan. As I learned about their desperate hunger for the Gospel, I was overcome with emotion for the Pakistani people. This moment was an encounter with the presence of God, and I knew that I was feeling His compassion for that nation. Jesus was inviting me to participate, to whatever extent I could bear, in what God wanted to do in Pakistan. At that moment, I felt the invitation was to participate through prayer. I prayed. As I prayed, I wept tears of passion, praying that God would send laborers to the harvest. I prayed for the peoples' hearts to be open to the Gospel and for God to raise up leaders to multiply disciple makers throughout the nation of Pakistan. I prayed for God to move in Pakistan. After that encounter with God, I knew that somehow I would be a part of what God was doing in that nation.

Over the next seven years, I moved from my hometown in Louisiana to a city I had never heard of in Florida to plant a church and build relationships with amazing men and women who are in passionate pursuit of Jesus, both inside and outside of that new church plant. And during those years, we helped pioneer spreading the Gospel among the Marwari People of Pakistan, where 2,700 people from 27 villages began to follow Jesus. I am thankful for God's abundance of mercy and grace through which He invited me to participate in what He is doing in the world! I am so grateful to have said

“Yes”, and I emphatically choose to continue to say “Yes!”. His invitation plus my “Yes” has equaled a journey immeasurably greater than I could ask, think, or imagine.

Then in May 2022, our trip to Pakistan happened. God planned to build on His previous work! Approximately 22,000 Pakistanis, most of whom had never before heard the Gospel, attended our Jesus Festival. Initial reports showed 9,850 of those who attended were born again. In this single event, our prior Gospel work multiplied from 27 villages to 158 villages and from 2,700 new believers to approximately 12,500. Discipleship groups are being established in the new villages with the new believers as I write these words.

The Lord’s grace in Pakistan results from His mercy and the unity in relationships between multiple members of the Global Body of Christ. Two other local Florida churches joined our church plant in unity to put on one of the three Jesus Festivals that we have done in the area of the Marwari peoples. Also, a non-profit that is headquartered thousands of miles from Florida partnered with us and even traveled on our recent trip to Pakistan to experience God’s miracles firsthand.

God is still writing this story, and I am thankful to get to be a part. I am confident that the ministry that God started both in Pakistan and in Clearwater, Florida, is in its infancy, and the best is yet to come.

What you have read in the preceding paragraphs did not happen by accident. The church planting in Florida, the building of strong relationships with other local churches and church networks, and the helping to pioneer church work in Pakistan has coincided with my doctoral studies. I have had the privilege of being able to personally practice what I have learned throughout our cohort’s doctoral classwork and throughout

this doctoral thesis project. What I have practiced has worked. I want to assure the reader that my story is not my research. My story is merely an example of the principles I have learned throughout my research being put into practice.

I sincerely believe the accomplishment of The Great Commission will happen as yours and my local churches become more globally connected. Jesus prayed in John 17:22-23, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” In Jesus’s prayer, the unity of the Global Church is the prerequisite for the world to acknowledge that the Father so loved them that He sent his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.²

How do we unify when there are over 41,000 Christian denominations around the world?³ A Christian denomination is a Christian organization of congregations who are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices.⁴ I am thankful for the multiple relationships that I have with people of various denominations. Until the middle of my teenage years, I was a part of the Southern Baptist Denomination. It is through them that I learned a passion for the Scriptures. I can flip the pages to any book of the Bible faster than most because of the Bible drills we did in Sunday School. Pioneers like Martin Luther and John Wesley who started some of the major denominations such as the Lutheran Church and the Methodist Church beautifully unified Christians around a

² John 3:16.

³ Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross. *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 2009, 69-69.

⁴ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “denomination,” accessed July 9, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/denomination>.

common mission. Unity is in the definition of the word “denomination,” and yet in many cases, denominations were created out of and continued because of discord and disunity. Many of the splits that caused new denominations to form were due to differences in beliefs on methods of baptism, communion, worship, and a whole host of other interpretations on various verses from Scripture.

Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines unity as “Oneness” and as, “A condition of harmony: Accord.”⁵ Accord is defined as bringing into agreement: reconcile.⁶ Local churches must find the way to reconcile divisions created in both our recent and distant histories to live out Christ’s Great Commission through harmony and oneness. This is the only way Christ’s Great Commission will be accomplished. For local churches to reconcile and work together in some way, there must be some legitimate relationship, some type of connection between the churches. This begs the question that has driven the entirety of this research: How does a local church connect to the global body of Christ? How does a local church become a globally connected church?

The Histories

After we read Jesus’s prayer in John 17 of Him praying for the church to be unified with himself and with each other, Jesus died crucified on a cross, was resurrected from the grave, ascended to heaven, and then poured out the Holy Spirit as a gift to his church. In speaking of the Holy Spirit Jesus said, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For

⁵ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “unity,” accessed July 7, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/unity>.

⁶ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “accord,” accessed July 7, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/accord>.

John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”⁷ He then said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”⁸ Throughout Acts we see how the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus’s fledgling church to be mighty witnesses beginning a global mission with the authority to fulfill Jesus’s Great Commission of making disciples of all nations. The person of the Holy Spirit is still at work accomplishing God’s Mission today. President of Asbury Theological Seminary and Professor of World Christianity, Dr. Timothy Tennent writes, “The Holy Spirit is still the agent of initiating, calling, sending, and directing the unfolding of the *missio dei* as He was in the life of the early church.”⁹ One of the ways the Holy Spirit does this is by leading those who follow Him into unity.

Ephesians 4:3-6 says:

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The earliest church kept the unity of the Spirit of Christ as shown by their community. For the last 2000 years, Acts 2:42-47 has been shown as an example of what Christian unity and community can look like. Here is a “snapshot” of how using this passage to encourage unity and community in a local church has been lived out.

Retired Pastor Steven J. Cole of Flagstaff Christian Fellowship used this passage in a sermon titled “Snapshot of a Healthy Church (Acts 2:42-47)”. Pastor Steven said, “This

⁷ Acts 1:4-5.

⁸ Acts 1:8.

⁹ Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010), 430.

snapshot shows us the marks of a healthy church so we can measure ourselves by it and seek to follow its example. A healthy church is marked by continual devotion to the Lord, to His people, and to His work in the world.”¹⁰

A problem with deep unity in community can be the felt comfort that results from a community in unity. When one is comfortable, it can be difficult to go outside of that comfort. Even still, one of the main purposes of the unity of believers as mentioned in Jesus’s John 17 prayer is evangelism.¹¹ Evangelism forces us to go outside of ourselves, potentially outside of one’s comfort, to impact another. Evangelism is taking steps towards fulfilling Christ’s Commission, a discipleship-based commission that cannot be done without reaching outside of one’s current community to impact others.

Luke’s historical account of the early church in the book of Acts shows that the believers stayed in and around Jerusalem. As Wyatt Graham, the director for The Gospel Coalition Canada, states, “During the first few years after Jesus ascended into heaven, Christianity mainly existed in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. But just as it got its legs under its body, persecution came. And the still small church fled across the country. They scattered.”¹² Pastor and chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary John Piper, interprets the early church’s staying in Jerusalem by stating:

The lesson is that comfort and ease and affluence and prosperity and safety and freedom often cause a tremendous inertia in the church. The very things that we think would produce personnel and energy and creative investment of time and money in the cause of Christ and his kingdom, instead produce, again and again,

¹⁰ Steven J. Cole, "Lesson 9: Snapshot of a Healthy Church (Acts 2:42-47)," <https://www.bible.org>, August 6, 2013, accessed July 19, 2022, <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-9-snapshot-healthy-church-acts-242-47>.

¹¹ John 17:20-23.

¹² Wyatt Graham, "The First Twenty Years: What happened to the Church immediately after Jesus died?," *The Gospel Coalition Canadian Edition*, August 29, 2018, accessed July 2022, <https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/detrinitate/the-first-twenty-years-what-happened-to-the-church-immediately-after-jesus-died/>.

the exact opposite—weakness, apathy, lethargy, self-centeredness, preoccupation with security.¹³

It would seem the earliest of believers stayed with what was comfortable, which was Jerusalem, until discomfort—which came in the form of persecution—encouraged obedience. The result of the discomforting persecution was the beginning of the fulfillment of Christ’s Great Commission. It was the beginning of going to make disciples of all nations.

The Holy Spirit directed the expansion into the nations. We see this clearly in the book of Acts. Acts 6:6 says, “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.” God has a process to His plan, and the Holy Spirit is leading it. Later in Acts 19, we read that it is implied by a crowd member that almost all the province of Asia had heard the word of the Lord.¹⁴ The Holy Spirit wanted Asia to know Him, but he wanted it to happen in His way, in His time, through His means. His way, His time, and His means included Paul skipping Asia and going to Ephesus to make disciples. Then the new disciples who had migrated to the economic mecca of Ephesus from Asia went back and evangelized their home province. The benefits of the dispersion and expansion of Christians from Jerusalem to the rest of the world outweighed the potential for problems.

This expansion of the Christian community to different peoples from different cultures came with new theological questions. These new questions brought the potential for division. The leaders of the church confronted the division with mercy,

¹³ John Piper, "Spreading Power through Persecution," *Desiring God*, May 5, 1991, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/spreading-power-through-persecution>.

¹⁴ Acts 19:26.

grace, and a biblical understanding that led to unity in exemplifying the character of Christ no matter the culture.¹⁵ Still, there arose those who caused divisions in the growing Body of Christ. In 2 Timothy 1:15 we see that many deserted Paul. In Philippians 4:2 Paul is encouraging Euodia and Syntyche who had contended for the Gospel by Paul's side to be of the same mind in the Lord. Apparently, the disagreement between the two women was important enough to include an encouragement toward its end in the Scripture. In 2 Timothy 2:17-18 we see that Hymenaeus and Philetus had begun creating division and discouragement by teaching that the resurrection had already taken place. The leadership of the church dealt with the division in the multicultural, multilingual, and multicontinental Church as led by the Lord and left God-breathed Scriptural examples for us to do the same.

This expansion of the Christian community has continued for the last 2000 years. Since we know God is unchanging, we can know that the Holy Spirit has directed much of the last 2000 years of Christian expansion around the world.¹⁶ This expansion brought with it the multiplication of theological questions and the potential for divisions in the body. Over the past 2000 years, at least 41,000 of those potentials for division manifested into reality. We have at least 41,000 different denominations in 193 nations around the world who are unified separately on their different answers to the many theological questions that have risen.

I recognize that some of the past and present formations of new churches or new denominations were separations from “what was”, and these separations needed to take place because “what was” had left the truth of the Gospel. I also recognize that

¹⁵ Acts 15:1-29.

¹⁶ Hebrews 13:7.

many and possibly most of the denominations of churches are properly unified around the Biblical mission to make disciples of all nations. Even so, I believe that many of the separations could have been avoided by following Paul's plea to the Philippians, "...make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."¹⁷

Sadly, the multiplication of division is continuing today as national and international conferences of denominational leaders debate theological questions that developed as cultural challenges were used in turn to challenge Scripture. Some of the church divisions have even made headlines in secular news outlets. For example, *NBC News* highlights issues in the SBC saying, "Celebrity evangelical Bible teacher Beth Moore's recent split with the Southern Baptist Convention is the latest in a string of public departures that underscore issues of gender, race and political division within the denomination, some former and current members say."¹⁸ *USA Today* had headlines for an article showcasing another divide saying, "Global Methodist Church announces May launch, split from United Methodist Church over LGBTQ rights."¹⁹

Even with the challenges of these recent divisions, the Global Body of Christ is continuing to expand around the world. Not only is the Global Church expanding, but there are various networks that are bridging the division by unifying on a common mission. A few prominent examples include The Lausanne Movement, Finishing The

¹⁷ Philippians 2:2.

¹⁸ Caroline Radnofsky and Suzanne Ciechalsky, "Beth Moore split highlights division in the Southern Baptist Convention," *nbcnews.com*, March 21, 2021, accessed July 22, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/religion/beth-moore-split-highlights-division-southern-baptist-convention-n1261120>.

¹⁹ Liam Adams, "Global Methodist Church announces May launch, split from United Methodist Church over LGBTQ rights," *USA TODAY*, March 3, 2022, accessed July 23, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/03/03/united-methodist-church-split-new-denomination/9368541002/>.

Task, Finish 2030, and Call 2 All.²⁰ These organizations focus on connecting the Global Church across denominational lines for the sake of accomplishing Christ's Great Commission. I believe the movements these massive networks are creating are vital to the unity of the body of Christ, but I also believe the path to Jesus's prayer for unity requires more. The Bible requires every part of the Body to be connected to the whole Body under the leadership of Christ the head. If we see the Body of Christ as a whole, the Global Body of Christ, that implies every local church must be connected in some way to the Global Body of Christ.

An Introduction to Chapter 2

Biblical Foundations:

Why Being Globally Connected is Necessary for Every Local Church

As Christians we follow the Bible. We use the Bible to study and to learn about who God is and how to live a life in relationship with Him. As we come to know the God of the Bible, we believe Him, and put into practice the principles found in the Holy Scripture. Our lives begin to showcase a real relationship with God.

Businessman and Philanthropist W. Clement Stone is often quoted saying, "You are a product of your environment. So, choose the environment that will best develop you towards your objective. Analyze your life in terms of environment."²¹ Christians are instructed to be imitators of the Heavenly Father as dearly beloved children.²² A child

²⁰ <https://lausanne.org>; <https://finishingthetask.com>; <https://finish2030.com>; <https://www.call2all.org>.

²¹ W. Clement Stone, "A Quote by W. Clement Stone," Goodreads, N.p., n.d. Web. 27 July 2022.

²² Ephesians 5:1.

who understands they are dearly loved by their father is one who enjoys spending time with their father. They end up being a multiplication of not only the nature of their father, but also of many mannerisms and personality traits of their father. This is because of the amount of time spent in an environment that includes their father.

As Christians, we are children of God. The Bible says that when we draw near to God, He draws near to us.²³ We are to pursue the environment of our Heavenly Father's presence because He first pursued us by sending His only begotten Son. When we draw near, He is always there. As we spend time in relationship with Him, we become a product of our environment. His characteristics are reflected through us. As we read in Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." These are the product of spending time in the right environment, an environment created by boldly and intentionally drawing near to God.

The fruits of the Spirit in the list in Galatians 5:22-23 are not the only characteristics of the Heavenly Father. He is also the Trinitarian God in perfect unity with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Professor of Early Christianity Dr. Donald Fairbairn writes about the Trinity saying:

God possesses both a unity of substance and a unity of fellowship. The persons of the Trinity are a single God precisely because they share a common nature or substance, or to say it the way I did above, they have every attribute or characteristic in common. But this is not the only kind of unity the persons of the Trinity share; they also share in a unity of love, of fellowship, and that kind of unity is possible precisely because they are distinct as persons. Identical in substance and attributes (characteristics), they nevertheless relate to one another as distinct persons. Therefore, they can be and are united to one another in giving and receiving love.²⁴

²³ James 4:8.

²⁴ Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 2009, 1130, Kindle Edition.

God created us in His image to reflect His nature and characteristics to the world, but we cannot reflect the same kind of unity in substance with the Heavenly Father. We are not God. He always was. Though we always will be with Him, we have not always been. However, we do grow to be like Him as we experience the unity of love and of fellowship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We have been made worthy to fellowship with Him because of Jesus. Unity and fellowship with God are a prerequisite for the same unity and fellowship that is to be reflected between Christians. We do what we see our Heavenly Father doing. This is the unified oneness between believers that Jesus prayed for future believers to experience in John 17:20-23.

The unity of the Trinity is exemplified throughout His creation because the characteristics of the creator cannot help but to be exemplified in and through His creations. In chapter 2 I use a few analogies from Scripture and a few metaphors from nature to show how this unity is exemplified in creation. Romans 1:20 says, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, so that people are without excuse.” Ephesians 5:1 says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” From Scripture we see we are to imitate what we can identify as our Heavenly Father’s nature. This is a command. Since unity is clearly seen in His divine nature, we must pursue greater connection with each other in the Body of Christ. The blessings of synergy are only found with unity in diversity. The more that we know Him, the more we will reflect His nature of unity in our relationships with others in the Global Body of Christ. The more that we know Him, the more we will pursue relationships with those who He has designed for us to connect

with. If this is the case individually, then this is the case for a group of individuals called a local church. Each local church is designed by God to be connected and synergistically unified to the Global Body of Christ.

An Introduction to Chapter 3

(Literature Review)

The past 7 years of doctoral study has led me to read a considerable amount of literature. I am forever grateful for the sacrifice each author made to write these amazing works. In chapter three, I take thirteen of the books that have had the weightiest impact on this research project and give a description of the aspects of each book that most informed this research. As an introduction to chapter three, here is a list of five of those thirteen books with a one-to-two sentence description of the most applicable aspects of the work.

Our Global Families²⁵

The title “Christian” delineates a family connection that runs deeper than denominational ties, cultural ties, geographical ties, and even traditional familial ties.

²⁵ Todd M. Johnson and M. Cindy Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), Kindle Edition.

Life in the Trinity²⁶

The supernatural love and life of God connect Christians more deeply than any natural and physical connection, and when we receive this by faith, there is nothing that can disconnect our bondedness other than ignorance or unbelief.

Transforming Mission²⁷

It is simply not enough for churches to think about involvement in missions. Churches must shift the paradigm from multiple churches on multiple missions to the singular mission of God is His Global Church!

The New Shape of World Christianity²⁸

A deep appreciation of heritage combined with a deep understanding of a citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven will cause a love and willingness to lay down our lives for other cultures to be able to understand the good news of the Gospel of Grace that so graciously saved our own people!

Landmark Essays in Mission and Global Christianity²⁹

“The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle”

²⁶ Fairbairn, *Life In The Trinity*, 3964, Kindle Edition.

²⁷ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books), 2011.

²⁸ Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009), Kindle Edition.

²⁹ C. Rene Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unity Principle," In *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, by Robert L. Gallagher & Paul Hertig (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), Kindle Edition.

The culture of seeking unity within local congregations will cause the local congregations themselves to seek unity between one another. The seeking of unity creates connection, and these connections multiplied creates the reality of the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17.

An Introduction to Chapter 4

(The Research Methodology)

For this project I combined multiple types of research to strengthen the outcome. I first used quantitative research for the purpose of identifying participants who met the predetermined qualifications of a globally connected church. I then used qualitative research methods to identify how each church became more globally connected. My hope was to ascertain the overarching principles which had been shown to help each church in their process towards becoming a more globally connected church.

For the quantitative portion of the research project, I generated a two-part questionnaire and sent it to local, national, and international lead pastors. Forty-six of the pastors that I sent the survey instrument to completed it. Part one of the questionnaire asked 16 anonymous questions which were designed to identify the lead pastors whose churches were the most globally connected. Part two of the questionnaire gave each participant the opportunity to opt into the qualitative portion of the research study by providing their name, email, number, church location, and church name. I then pursued a semi-formal interview with the most globally connected participants who had completed both part one and part two of the questionnaire.

The semi-formal interview began the qualitative portion of the research project. I chose to use a method of gathering and interpreting the qualitative data called Grounded Theory. The book, *Constructing Grounding Theory* by Professor and Sociologist Dr. Kathy Charmaz, became my instruction manual for this portion of the research.³⁰

Dr. Charmaz describes Grounded Theory by saying:

“Grounded theory methods consist of systematic yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves... Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis.”³¹

I interviewed 18 senior pastors who had been identified as leaders of the most globally connected local churches of the forty-six local churches who completed the Globally Connected Questionnaire. My hope was to develop a theory grounded in the research which would then answer my question: How can a local church become a more globally connected church?

After conducting the interviews, I began to apply the Grounded Theory Method of qualitative research to the data by transcribing each interview. Grounded Theory is very time consuming but provides a helpful and structured approach to analyzing data from semi-formal interviews. The transcriptions resulted in anywhere from twelve to twenty pages of single-spaced data per interview.

After transcribing an interview, I then performed the initial coding phase of Grounded Theory on the data from the interview. Initial coding consists of generating a

³⁰ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oak: Sage Publications, 2014).

³¹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 1.

code for each line of the data. The initial code categorizes and organizes the material in the line. This allowed me to begin analytic interaction with the data.

Throughout the research Charmaz encourages the researcher to document any analytic ideas through memos. These memos help to constantly compare old analytic ideas with new ones emerging from the data. These memos written throughout the research project helped me to create the structure for my final analysis of how a local church becomes a globally connected church.

The Grounded Theory method of research calls for the researcher to do focused coding after the initial coding phase. Where initial coding is a line-by-line coding which forces one to stick close to the original data, focused coding categorizes and codes the initial codes into slightly broader analytic ideas. The focus coding process also ensures that the researcher goes back over the data again and again to ensure that the emerging analytic categories are true to the data. Focus coding allowed me to analyze and organize much larger portions of each interview. It also initiated more memos that would be used to inform the outcome of this project.

The focused codes began to show conceptual categories emerging from the data. Organizing and analyzing the conceptual categories through the memo-writing process enabled me to raise their level of importance from conceptual categories to theoretical categories. This process happened by taking the analytical ideas found in the conceptual categories, drilling down from the memos and focused codes to the initial codes and the transcription data, then analyzing the baseline data in multiple places across multiple interviews. This going back and forth from the conceptual

category to the codes and original transcription data is Grounded Theory's way of ensuring the emerging theoretical category is grounded in the data.

Grounded Theory instructs the researcher to do both initial and theoretical sampling. Initial sampling is the process of gathering the initial data. Charmaz defines theoretical sampling as seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in one's emerging theory.³² Theoretical sampling is repeated until saturation is reached, and saturation is reached when new categories or properties are no longer emerging from the data.

After going through the Grounded Theory process for the first four or five interviews, definite theoretical categories began to emerge from the data. These theoretical categories were the same for each church even though they varied in size, location, and culture. With each successive interview, the same identifiable pattern was being repeated. By the 7th and 8th interview, there were no new properties or categories emerging. I continued to conduct the Grounded Theory process for the 9th and 10th interviews to ensure that saturation had been reached.

I had the opportunity to strengthen the research through one more theoretical sample. I have been developing a friendship with a Pakistani church planter via What's App and Zoom calls. I decided to interview him as he had recently planted a new work in an unreached area of Pakistan that was expanding rapidly. After having various conversations, it was clear that his new work followed the same principles as those that were identified in my previous research. I then had the opportunity to go to Pakistan to see in person what was told to me through What's App discussions. This was an

³² Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 192.

exciting trip as this new theoretical sample clearly showed that the previously identified theoretical categories were being exemplified and were working to help this work become more globally connected. This expansion was happening despite it being a new work, in a new culture, amid persecution, and amid the COVID pandemic.

The goal of Grounded Theory is to produce a theory that is grounded in the research data. The goal of this research project was to identify principles each church demonstrated on their journey to becoming more and more connected to the global Body of Christ, then to identify how these principles were similar or different. I wanted to find solid theoretical principles that through the Grounded Theory process could be raised to the level of grounded theory, and subsequently applied by any local church to help that local church become more globally connected.

An Introduction to Chapter 5

(The Outcomes and Conclusion)

John 17:20-23 says:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

According to Jesus's prayer, complete unity will precede the world knowing that the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. This would mean that unity

in the Body of Christ is the most effective form of evangelism.³³ This would also mean that disunity in the Body of Christ is the most effective way that the enemy of our souls uses to keep the world from recognizing Jesus as Lord.

Over the past 2000 years, Satan has done a pretty good job of disunifying the Body of Christ. Even still, I believe that Jesus's prayer is more powerful than all of Satan's efforts. Each part of the Global Body of Christ will be connected to each other, just as each part of a healthy body is connected to each other.

How does a local church become a globally connected church? This thesis project attempts to understand and present practical principles to help any local church become more connected to the Global Body of Christ. Through this research I found that a local church becomes more globally connected by having consistent encounters with God followed by surrender. This leads to the church going outside of itself, sowing outside of itself, building relationships outside of itself, and discipling and being discipled by those new relationships. My prayer is that the reading of this thesis-project encourages you and your church to take steps to follow these principles and connect to the Body of Christ more deeply. The world is waiting to see Jesus.

³³ The claim that unity is the most effective form of evangelism is based on the verses referenced above. In verse 21 Jesus says, "Then the world will know you sent me..." This comes after the future believers that Jesus is praying for in John 17:20-23 are brought to complete unity.

CHAPTER 2

WHY A GLOBALLY CONNECTED CHURCH IS NECESSARY

What if we were supposed to do things a bit differently? The Global Church is divided, and this divisiveness is antithetical to our Great Assignment, our Great Commission given to us by Jesus before he ascended into heaven. I hear things like, “Why does another new church plant have to come to this town? They will steal all of our people.” Or “They are scalping our talent.” Or “They wouldn’t help us because they are Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, or *insert your favorite denominational slang.*” Too often words like these are coming from the mouths of churchgoers and pastors alike. These sentiments divide, and division is a problem. Things are supposed to be different.

Jesus’s prayer in John 17 is one of the most beautiful prayers, if not the most beautiful prayer ever prayed on this earth. It was one of the final prayers of our Lord and Savior before he would go to the Cross to give his life for the creation of His bride, the Church. His desire was and is that His beloved be unified in herself and unified with Him. He would accomplish this by cleansing her with the washing of the water that comes through His Word, and presenting her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.¹ He wants his beautiful bride to be mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Himself,² and in doing so she is to become an equally yoked marriage partner perfected by His sacrifice for her and empowered by His life in her.³ This is fulfilled as His Bride, the Church, reaches the *unity* of the faith and of the knowledge of her husband, Jesus Christ.

¹ Ephesians 5:26-27.

² Ephesians 4:13.

³ 1 John 4:17; 1 John 3:2-3.

South African missiologist David Bosch writes, “We have to confess that the loss of ecclesial unity is not just a vexation, but a sin. Unity is not an optional extra. It is, in Christ, already a fact, a given. At the same time, it is a command: ‘Be One!’”⁴ Jesus showed this central importance of unity for His bride when he devoted so much of his prayer on the night before he was crucified to it. Jesus prayed, *“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*⁵ What causes the world to know that God so loved them that He sent his only Son for them? It is the Bride of Christ being brought to complete unity. According to Jesus’s prayer, unity is the most effective form of evangelism. Unity is the only way we will fully accomplish The Great Commission for every disciple to make disciples of every tribe, tongue, and nation.

UNITY is the difference!

In an in depth look at the pursuit of unity in the early church and its effectiveness in the pagan world, The Ecuadorian Missiologist Dr. C. Rene Padilla wrote the following:

The impact that the early church made on non-Christians because of Christian brotherhood across natural barriers can hardly be overestimated. The abolition of the old separation between Jew and Gentile was undoubtedly one of the most amazing accomplishments of the gospel in the first century. Equally amazing, however, was the breaking down of the class distinction between master and slave. As Michael Green comments, “When the Christian missionaries not only proclaimed that in Christ the distinctions between slave and free man were done away as surely as those between Jew and Greek, but actually lived in accordance with their principles, then this had an enormous appeal”⁶ In F. F.

⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 460.

⁵ John 17:22-23.

⁶ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (London. Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), 117-118.

Bruce's words, "Perhaps this was the way in which the gospel made the deepest impression on the pagan world".⁷⁸

The unity that Christ called for in the Church and that was exemplified in the early church has a profound effect on those outside the church. If unity is the most effective form of evangelism, then disunity is the most effective form of keeping the world from knowing Jesus. Divisions in the body of Christ are merely the ploy of the enemy to keep the world from eternal life.⁹ Divisions are a ploy to keep the Global Church ignorant of the power of connecting with one another across opinionated divides. There is a better way!

The Bible is clear that unity is that better way. Unity comes at a price. We purchase unity through the giving over of our pride, our know-it-all mentality, our desire to be the hero, and everything else that would prevent us from connecting with other parts of the Global Body of Christ. Too many assume that the diversity of Christians should segregate them. This is not true. "The foundation for our unity as Christians throughout the world today is not our likeness but our diversity."¹⁰ True unity requires deep connection based on a commonality. That commonality between Christians is Jesus. Ephesians 4:4-6 states, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were

⁷ Frederick F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1957), 277.

⁸ C. Rene Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unity Principle," In *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, by Robert L. Gallagher & Paul Hertig (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), Kindle Edition, 1983.

⁹ This claim is based in Ephesians 6:12. If unity is commanded in multiple places of Scripture, then the initiation of discord and disunity would not come from the Holy Spirit who initiated the command for unity. It would have to come from the enemy who does not want to see The Great Commission of Kingdom of God accomplished.

¹⁰ Paul-Gordon Chandler, *God's Global Mosaic: What We Can Learn from Christians Around the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 15.

called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” We can connect based on the one thing that we have in common—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ is thicker than family blood. It’s time for the Global Body of Christ to put aside its differences and to connect; then the world will know that the Father sent the Son. It is this deep connection that shows a lost and dying world that Christ’s Global Church is on mission together to bring the same hope and life to the world that it possesses. Global revival is a result of a Global Church that is Globally Connected. Dr. David Bosch agrees saying, “Ultimately unity in mission and mission in unity do not merely serve the church but, through the church, stand in the service of humankind and seek to manifest the cosmic rule of Christ.”¹¹

There are various sections in the Bible that show God’s intent for each local church to be connected to the global whole. This Chapter will feature three of those sections and end by showing the over-arching theme of the Bible calling for complete unity. This is a unity that will only be realized when each local church realizes the truth of Bosch’s quote previously referenced. He called unity already a fact in Christ, yet still a command. Each local church must realize it is already connected to the Global Body of Christ by being in Christ. As each local church believes this fact, it will begin to take actions in line with what it believes—actions that display that it is becoming a Globally Connected Church.

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 459.

The Global Church – Born to Unite

Colossians 1:15-17 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus is the Son of God. He is also the image of the invisible God. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.¹² For a crystal-clear picture of who the invisible Father is, we look to the visible Son. The way that Jesus walked the earth is the exact representation of how the Father would have walked the earth. The way that Jesus responded to people is an exact representation of how the Father would have responded to people. The things that Jesus said are an exact representation of what the Father would have said. Since Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, the Father is the same yesterday today and forever.¹³ The Father and the Son are united in a perfect unity. They are separate persons, but because of their unity, in essence they are one.

Colossians 1:16 says that all things, including the church, were created through Jesus and for Jesus. How was the church created through Jesus? Didn't the church come as a product of Jesus's powerful method of discipleship? Yes, but there is so much more to it than that.

Jesus died on the cross. Through his death on the cross, life was made possible for the church. Paul refers to Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:45 as the last Adam. The first Adam was put into a deep sleep and his bride, Eve, came out from his side. This that

¹² Hebrews 1:3.

¹³ Hebrews 13:8.

happened to the first Adam and his bride was a foreshadowing of that which would happen to the last Adam and his bride. Chinese Revivalist Watchman Nee delineates:

In Ephesians 5 we have the only chapter in the Bible which explains the passage in Genesis 2. I refer to what is contained in those words, ‘Christ... loved the church and gave himself up for it.’ The love here is the love of husband for wife.” What is in view in this passage is not atonement for sin but the creation of the Church, for which end it is said that He ‘gave himself’. ¹⁴

When Jesus had fallen into the deep sleep of death, the soldier pierced his side and blood and water spewed out. This represented the bringing forth from out of His person the bride of Christ, the Global Church. This is a not a bride born of natural descent. No—this is a bride born of God!¹⁵

The first Adam was a living soul with a mind, a will, and emotions.¹⁶ He was hand crafted from the dust of the earth. Eve was made from Adam and hence was from the dust of the earth. But the last Adam was a life-giving spirit. In Jesus’s act of giving birth to the Church, he was enabling His bride to be born of Spirit! Jesus told Nicodemus that one cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born of water and of Spirit, flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.¹⁷ When we are born again, we are born of spirit because of Jesus. Just as Eve was like her husband because she came from him, the Church, and every individual person in the Church, is like Jesus because we came from Him. This is what 1 Corinthians 15:48 means when it says, “Like the one made of dust, so too are those made of dust, and like the one from heaven, so too

¹⁴ Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1977), 105-121.

¹⁵ John 1:13.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:45.

¹⁷ John 3:5-6.

those who are from heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, let us also bear the image of the heavenly man.”¹⁸

The church is made in the image of Christ and is to be His exact representation to the world. In the beginning God made mankind in his image as stated in Genesis.¹⁹ The Hebrew word used for image is the word *tselem*. This word is also translated as the word idol. In ancient history, and in some parts of the world even today, idols are hand crafted of precious metals, wood, or clay, and placed in an honored position in the home. The people of Bible times would believe that this idol was a representation of the god they believed in. The idol was said to be made in the image of their god and was thought to carry the spirit of that god. In the same way, we are made in the *tselem* of God. We were made to be a representation of God to this world.²⁰ We were made to carry His Spirit. Adam, in choosing sin, chose separation from the Spirit of God. This was not God’s intention for mankind. Jesus was the answer to Adam’s blunder. When Jesus gave birth to His Bride, He made the Church able to carry the very Spirit of God within her and thus restored her to the image of God, His representation in this world.²¹ The apostle John clearly makes this point in his first letter to the church when he says, “In this world we are like Jesus.”²²

Jesus prayed for his bride to be and said in prayer to his Father, “that they (the Church) may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me...”²³ The oneness of the

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:48-49 NET.

¹⁹ Genesis 1:27.

²⁰ Marc Cortez. "What It Means to "Be Made in the Image of God," Christianity.com, September 24, 2012, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/theology/man/an-image-an-idol-and-an-irritated-iguana.html>.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 15:49.

²² 1 John 4:17b.

²³ John 17:22-23.

Church depends on our understanding that we are made in His image; we are made to be like Jesus in this world; and we have Him in us, uniting us and empowering us to be like Him in this world.

How is Christ in us, and how does that unite His body throughout the world? In John 16, Jesus promised that when he left, he would send the Advocate to be with us.²⁴ Jesus called the Advocate “the Spirit of Truth” who would receive from Jesus what Jesus had received from the Father and make it known to us, His Bride.²⁵ If Jesus said, “I am the way, the Truth, and the Life,” then the Spirit of Truth is the Spirit of Christ. God the Father was in Jesus the Son here on earth through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.²⁶ In the same way, God the Father is in Jesus the Son, and Jesus the Son is in us through the impartation of the Holy Spirit. It says the same in Galatians 4:6. “Because you are his (God’s) sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’”²⁷ Church Historian Donald Fairbairn in his work, *Life in the Trinity*, puts it this way, “The mutual sharing of relationship between Father and Son and between Son and believers depends on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the one who links us to that relationship by uniting us to the Son.”²⁸

If the Father and the Son are in each Christ follower through the Holy Spirit, and if the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in perfect unity as defined by the doctrine of the Trinity, then all those who follow Jesus should be in perfect unity by that same Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Father’s plan and the answer to Jesus’s John 17:23 prayer

²⁴ John 16:7.

²⁵ John 16:13-15.

²⁶ Acts 10:38.

²⁷ Galatians 4:6.

²⁸ Donald Fairbairn, *Life In The Trinity: An Introduction to Theology With The Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 3321, Kindle Edition.

for complete unity in the body of Christ. With all of the denominations, the divisions, and the mutual distrust in today's Global Church, one can deduce that the Global Church has not stepped into the perfect unity for which the Spirit of Christ has been given.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:3-6

Paul urged the Global Church to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. This implies that there is a counter effort to disunify the Global Church.²⁹ The author of this counter effort is Satan, and his purpose is the prevention the Church from accomplishing its task of making disciples of every tribe, tongue, and nation. This global evangelization task is dependent on the unity of the Global Church as laid out in Jesus's John 17:23 prayer. Missiologist David Bosch agrees: "The mutual coordination of mission and unity is non-negotiable. It is not simply derived from the new world situation or from changed circumstances, but from God's gift of unity in the one Body of Christ. God's people is one; Christ's Body is one."³⁰

In Ephesians 4:3-6, Paul outlines the oneness of our belief on multiple essential topics. According to Paul, there is only one way to think about these things. There is one Spirit who leads us into all truth. This truth that we are being led into is a deeper revelation of Jesus Christ.³¹ Dr. Timothy C. Tennent, a professor of World Christianity and the President of Asbury Theological Seminary, says it this way: "There are certain

²⁹ Paul's is actually writing this to the Ephesians. I say this is to the Global Church because Paul's letters were expected to be passed around and read in multiple churches. When canonized, the majority church accepted his letters as inspired by the Holy Spirit for all people and for all time. Therefore, this passage was not just to the Ephesians, but to the Global Church.

³⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Kindle Edition, 457.

³¹ John 16:13.

great ‘ecumenical’ truths—most notably Christ himself, who is the Truth—that unite all Christians in every age, affirmations that have been held *semper ubique ab omnibus* [always everywhere by all].³² Jesus himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”³³ There is not a separate set of truths for each religion throughout the world. There is one truth, and His name is Jesus. In the same way, there is not a separate set of truths for each denomination of Christianity. There is not a separate set of truths for the Baptists, the Pentecostals, the Charismatics, the Methodists, the Anglicans, and the Catholics. There is one truth, and His name is Jesus. Therefore, to the extent that each part of the Global Church grows in its understanding of the truth of both who Jesus is and who believers are in Jesus, that is the extent those parts of the Global Church will be unified with one another. This would also mean that to the extent that each local church grows in its understanding of who Jesus is and who itself is in Christ, that is the extent that the local church will be connected to the Global Body of Christ.

The Global Church grows in its unity as the gifts to the Church, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are faithful to equip those in their influence for the works of ministry.³⁴ These 5 gifts to the church are to speak the truth in love. By doing so they will be helping each under their care to grow in the truth of Jesus and thereby to grow to maturity in Jesus’s unity with one another.³⁵ The God-appointed leaders of the church have a primary role. Their primary role is not to do ministry. The act of doing ministry is “a” role of the leader in their personal life. As a leader in the

³² Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 185-186.

³³ John 14:6a.

³⁴ Ephesians 4:11-13.

³⁵ Ephesians 5:15.

church the leader's primary role is that of equipping the people of the church to do ministry.

According to a study done by the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, every year more than 4000 churches close their doors, and every year 2.7 million church goers fall into inactivity.³⁶ Dr. Colby Brent, in his Doctoral Thesis "Evaluating the Role of Empowering Leadership and Church Health" found that of the 8 different factors he measured, empowering leadership was the most statistically significant domain in determining health of a church.³⁷ In many ways leaders in churches have exercised their gifts of ministry for all to see but not to empower those watching to do the same. When this is the practice, it causes many of those under the influence of said leader to remain in a state of infancy, tossed to and fro by the doctrine of the one exercising their gifts.³⁸ To be able to lead in a way that matures and equips the church, the leader must have the same mindset as that of Christ Jesus who made this leadership statement: "You will do the same things I do and even greater."³⁹ If this is not the mentality of the leader, the selfishness of the leader will prevent the maturity of the church and will set a foundation for more schism in the future.

This was but one example of how the church can be led in the opposite direction of unity through Satan's influence. All disunity has selfishness at its root.⁴⁰ Unity between factions in the Global Church will come when one or all of the factions' revelation of Christ includes a deeper understanding of Philippians 2:5-8:

³⁶ Dr. Richard J. Krejcir, "Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline," *churchleadership.org*. 2007, accessed March 11, 2021, <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42346>.

³⁷ Brent Colby, *Evaluating the Role of Empowering Leadership and Church Health*, Doctoral Thesis, Education, Southeastern University, Lakeland, FL: Southeastern University, 2020.

³⁸ Ephesians 4:14.

³⁹ John 14:12.

⁴⁰ James 4:1-3.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross.

Connected to the Vine, Connected to One Another

In one of Jesus's last major teachings to his disciples before he was to go to the cross, He compared himself to a vine with his disciples being the branches. Jesus said, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."⁴¹

In the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus warns the disciples that there will only be fruit for those branches that remain in the vine. He then says, "Apart from me, you can do nothing."⁴² One would think that this was surely just a play on words. Surely mankind can do something apart from Jesus, apart from the connection to God—apart from His help. Thinking to Biblical times we see that men came together to try and build a tower to the heavens, the tower of Babel. The plan was magnificent. Let us make a name for ourselves in unity!⁴³ This plan failed because God himself prevented it. God scattered the people who were unified in themselves apart from Him. For mankind to do anything apart from the One with whom we were created to be in communion is pride. Proverbs 16:18 says that pride comes before destruction. James 4:6 says that

⁴¹ John 15:4.

⁴² John 15:5.

⁴³ Genesis 11:1-9.

God opposes the proud. Pride comes before destruction because God is the one opposing the works of the proud.

Apart from Christ we can do nothing, because apart from Him all of our works are built on the shaky ground of self. God will not let self-flourish for eternity because the payment for choosing self, choosing not God, is separation from God. God is life. This shows separation from God is separation from life which results in death.

Christ is the rock and the only foundation on top of whom the works of mankind will last. Christ is the vine out of whom every branch that is used for God's work grows. The very nature of the vine flows through every branch; therefore, though the work of every branch may be different, the fruit of every branch is the same. The branches receive the ability to bear fruit from their connection to the vine. Each branch can be identified as a branch connected to the vine by the love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that characterizes the work that branch. If a branch is connected to the vine, it is connected to every other branch that is connected to the vine.

We, the disciples of Christ, are the branches. By connecting to Jesus, the vine, we are connecting to every other disciple of Christ. The nature of Christ that causes our born-again heart to beat with a love for Christ, is the same nature that has been implanted in every other disciple that connects to Jesus. A Christ follower's connection to another Christ follower depends on each person's connection to Christ. If two Christians are connected to Christ, then the connection between those two is as strong as their connection to Christ. When two groups of Christ followers, two local churches, are connected to Christ, then the connection between those local churches is as strong

as their connection to Christ. Each branch is connected both to the vine and by the vine. Todd Johnson and Cindy Wu state it this way:

We need to see others in an accurate light with the goal of connecting to those who are different within our respective churches, as well as to the larger body of Christ. We have justified our divisions for too long. We now need to acknowledge and embrace the wider body of Christ.⁴⁴

The Global Body of Christ

I will never forget sitting down with Pastor Rick Lee at the Journey Church in Fernandina Beach, Florida. Pastor Rick used to be a missionary to the Bachata, a region on the Amazon Delta in Northeastern Brazil. While there, Pastor Rick had helped to plant over 250 churches. I am very thankful for the time that I got to spend sitting in his office, soaking up the wisdom that he had received from walking with God throughout his life. Pastor Rick would always go back to what he called the body life teaching of the Bible. He would tell me that I was created with a unique purpose as a distinct part of the “Body of Christ”. Pastor Rick would then explain how my purpose fit with the purpose of others to accomplish the mission of Christ throughout the world. Those discussions have stuck with me.

What if we took that same Body of Christ analogy and zoomed out from a personal perspective to a perspective at the level of the local church? If Pastor Rick is right, then that would mean a deepening synergy comes from the local church pursuing meaningful connection with the Global Body of Christ. If Pastor Rick is right, then each

⁴⁴ Todd M. Johnson and M. Cindy Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 111, Kindle Edition.

local church can only fulfill its ultimate mission if it is connected to the parts of the Global Church with whom it is designed to be connected.

Ephesians 2:10 says: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” This verse is usually taught and preached from an individual perspective. That perspective is not wrong. Each of us individually *are* God’s handiwork. Our Heavenly Father knows the count of the numbers of hairs on our head in this very moment.⁴⁵ He knew us before we were born. He formed each one of us in our mother’s womb.⁴⁶ He has prepared good works for each of us, and these good works are not random. They are planned. They have purpose. They are connected. Yet, when Paul writes these words, all of the pronouns are plural. He is talking to the Ephesians as a group, as a church—together. The local church is God’s handiwork. He knew each church before they were planted. He not only prepared each individual with good works, but He prepared those good works to be perfectly fit together in the local church to carry out His plan! Each local church has multiple purposes, and some of those purposes will only be realized as we pursue deeper connection with the Global Church. We have much to give to one another, and we have much to learn from one another.

Ecosystems and the Global Body of Christ

The Bible says that God’s nature, His method of doing things, can clearly be seen by looking at His creation.⁴⁷ The signature and stroke pattern of the artist is always

⁴⁵ Luke 12:7.

⁴⁶ Jeremiah 1:5.

⁴⁷ Romans 1:20.

discoverable in the examination of the artist's painting. Let us think for a moment about how God designed the natural world around us. Let's talk about what happens when something is prevented from accomplishing its God intended purpose in nature.

The eradication of the last wolf pack from Yellowstone National Park happened in the year 1926.⁴⁸ This started a process known as trophic cascading. The absence of this apex predator allowed the elk populations to dramatically increase and shifted their grazing and migration patterns. The elk spent more time grazing in the valleys and gorges. This overgrazing caused the trees to begin to die off. The lessening of the trees then lessened the beaver population which also affected the reptilian and amphibian populations. Erosion increased causing a changing of the way the rivers ran. Coyotes became the apex predators causing a decrease in mice and rabbits, which, combined with the lessening of the trees, also lessened the bird population. In the year 1995, the wolf pack was reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park. Over the last 20 years, Yellowstone has seen the restoration of each area negatively impacted by the wolf pack's absence. The elk population decreased. Their grazing habits shifted to be less in the open valleys. Tree heights quintupled within 4 years. More trees meant more birds and beavers. More beavers meant more reptiles and amphibians. Both the removal and reintroduction of the wolves started a trophic cascade that shifted everything from the top of the food chain to the very way that the rivers behaved.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Wolf Restoration*, May 21, 2020, accessed November 12, 2020,
<https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/wolf-restoration.htm>.

⁴⁹The following source is an excellent short video that helped me understand how wolves played a part in the mentioned trophic cascade observed in Yellowstone National Park.
Chris Agnos, *Sustainable Human*, November 5, 2017, accessed November 12, 2020,
<https://earthmaven.io/sustainablehuman/new-stories/how-wolves-change-rivers-FNwiZckBfEaRPI1PBbJ3mA>.

If we unpack the above story looking for principles of God's nature from His design of nature, we can see that God designed different animal species with different purposes that are dependent on one another within an ecosystem and between ecosystems. For instance: The health of the ecosystem of the plains and valleys depended on the wolf's curbing of the elk's grazing and eating habits. This also affected the ecosystem of the streams and rivers. The purposes of each animal and each ecosystem complement one another. When in proper relationship they positively impact the total ecosystem. Conversely, the total ecosystem is negatively impacted when the original purpose of each animal species and group of species within an ecosystem is not being carried out.

As stated before, God designed each person with a specific purpose in mind within the local body of Christ (the local church). Each individual accomplishing that purpose helps the ecosystem of the local church to healthily accomplish its designed function. When a person is not walking in all that God has for them, the ecosystem of their local church will not be accomplishing the entirety of its God-intended purpose. Other individuals within the ecosystem of the church may have to wait to accomplish the full expression of their individual purpose because their gifts are interdependent with the individual who is choosing not to be involved. An individual church is a growing, vibrant and life-giving ecosystem when more and more people within the church are growing in their understanding of who they are in Jesus and walking out their designed purpose as a member of this local body of Christ.

Just as God designed natural ecosystems with a specific purpose and intended them to work with other ecosystems to create a healthier global ecosystem, God

designed each local church with specific purposes meant to work together with other local churches in order to create a healthy Global Church or Global Body of Christ. As individual churches are empowering more and more people within their ecosystem to walk out their God-given purpose, some individuals within that ecosystem will have discipleship relationships with key parts of other local churches. As these relationships grow, the churches will grow in relationship and learn how the purposes of each local church synergistically benefits the greater ecosystem of the Global Body of Christ!

Paul uses the analogy of a human body in many of his letters. Ephesians 4:4 states that there is only one Body of Christ. There are not many separate bodies of Christ around the world, there is only one Body of Christ. In a discussion of Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, Dr. Fairbairn says:

In both of these passages, Paul subtly rebukes the attitude that says, ‘I do not need the other parts of the body,’ or “I am more important than the other parts of the body,” and in both passages he reminds Christians that all parts of the body are important, all need one another.⁵⁰

Every individual who is found in Christ is a part of His body. Every local church that is in Christ is a part of the one greater Global Body of Christ and needs one another.

Colossians 1:16 and 17 show that the Body of Christ was created through Jesus and for Jesus, and Jesus holds His Global Body together. In Christ each part of the Global Church is connected to one another and any part outside of Christ is cut off from the body.

When a finger is cut off or severed from the hand, if it is not reattached within 12 hours, the finger dies. The finger cannot move, much less carry out its function without

⁵⁰ Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, Kindle Edition, 1528.

the supply of blood that comes from its connection to the body. The same blood that runs through the toes eventually makes its way to the fingers. This blood carries the same oxygen and nutrients needed for each part of the body to survive. Though the finger may look different from other parts of the body and even function differently, still, the finger needs the same connection and the same infilling that the other parts of the body need.

Every part of the one Global Body of Christ needs the same nutrients found in the blood of Christ. Jesus's mercy, His Grace, His redemption, and His indwelling Spirit are the lifeblood of the Global Church. The connections between parts of the Global Body of Christ allow for the ever-deepening revelation of the nutrients found in Christ to flow freely between the members of Christ's Body and to adequately nourish them. When a part of the body is cut off from connection with the Body, that part of the body is cut off from the deepening revelation of Jesus because Christ's Body goes from glory to glory as it beholds more and more of the Lord's glory.⁵¹ Without adequate connection to the rest of the body, the cut off individual, church or denomination will eventually dry up and die due to stagnation—an over emphasis of yesterday's revelation without receiving a fresh relational understanding of, among other things, the Mercy, Grace, Redemption, and Spirit of Christ.

Not only does connection with the Global Body of Christ precipitate deepening life and growth, but that connection is also necessary for each member to accomplish their purposes, and for the body as a whole to accomplish its purpose. To draw this from Scripture, we will dive into the popular Pauline passage from 1 Corinthians 12.

⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but many.*⁵²

Once again, we see that there is only one body. There are not many separate bodies of Christ all throughout the world. There is only one body with many parts. These parts may include different races as alluded to by “Jews and Gentiles”, or different socioeconomic classes, as alluded to by slave or free. Regardless of race or status, the singular body of Christ throughout the world is connected by one Spirit from which all drink, the Spirit of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12 further analogizes the church to the human body by showing the importance of interconnected and interdependent purposes. For instance, 1 Corinthians 12:21 says, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” Each part of the body is different and necessary for other parts of the body to accomplish their function. Many times, it is taught as if these parts are mere representations of individuals within the body. The analogy must be more global than that. Mark A. Noll agrees with the global nature by saying:

The clear message of Scripture, reflected in various ways in the defining documents of almost all Christian traditions, is that all believers wherever they are found make up a universal entity. Believers in one local cultural expression of Christian faith are linked to all others in their local cultural settings because all are joined to Christ. This linkage, moreover, is much more than just a jigsaw puzzle where the pieces constitute a mosaic but touch only those pieces that are in closest proximity. Rather, the great image from Scripture is of the body of Christ where circulation (meaning assistance), a unified nervous system (meaning communication), and coordinated muscular exertion (meaning common action) are essential.⁵³

⁵² 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.

⁵³ Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 1965, Kindle Edition.

Since scripture says in 1 Corinthians 12:12 says there is but one body of Christ, let us similarly analogize the body on a deeper level than we normally do, using what we have learned in science class about our biological anatomy. We can do so because as previously stated, the nature of our God and the principles of the way His Kingdom works can be clearly seen throughout nature.

The basic building block of the body is the cell. Connections of cells make up tissues, and tissues connected together make up organs. Connected organs make up systems. Connected organs and systems make up the different parts suited for their function. The different parts of the body together under the direction of the head allow the body to complete its overall function of causing the world to know Jesus.⁵⁴

With the science of a human body before us, let us map out a possible understanding of the global church. The head is Christ, and He loves the body according to the purposes of His will.⁵⁵ Let's say that cells represent individual disciples of Christ. As individuals come together around certain giftings, they create tissues or ministries within the local church. Groupings of ministries together create departments or organs. Organs together can create a part of the body or a local church, like a thumb or a wrist. Not every local church contains every system or even every organ. Different local churches have varying degrees of organs and/or systems running in and through them. Liken this to a thumb which has bone, muscle, skin, nails, veins, and capillaries but does not have an artery and has less of each organ listed than the wrist. In the same way, "local church thumb" has preaching, worship, and evangelism but is not connected to global missions. "Local church wrist" has preaching, worship, evangelism,

⁵⁴ Matthew 28:19, John 17:23.

⁵⁵ Colossians 1:18.

and is very connected with global missions. Just as the thumb needs the wrist and the wrist needs the thumb in order for each to play their role carrying out the head's orders, "local church thumb" needs the connections of "local church wrist" in order to help scratch the itch of "local church foot" around the world. The thumb can touch the foot and benefit the foot and from time to time this is necessary. The thumb, however, would never be as connected to the foot as it is to the wrist because of where God placed the thumb and the foot in the body. Yet because of the foot, the thumb can get further down the path which Christ directs the whole body to go.

The thumb receives instruction and nourishment through the wrist. This does not make the thumb less than the wrist but is merely the way that the thumb and wrist were created to interact. In the same way, "local church thumb" may need to learn better preaching and worship styles from "local church wrist". This does not make "local church thumb" less than "local church wrist" but is merely the way they were created to interact because of their location in time and space.

Just as every part of the body needs every other part in order to carry out the purpose of the head in the world, every local church must be connected to the Global Body of Christ. Every local church must be in the process of becoming a more Globally Connected Church. Without that connection, the local church will never be able to carry out the purpose of the head, and the Body of Christ as a whole will be missing a key aspect of design that is only found in that particular local part of the body of Christ. The differences in design and function for local churches throughout the Global Body of Christ are not a detriment to unity but an added benefit because of the principle of synergy that God wove into the universe. "Synergy is the interaction or cooperation of

two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects.”⁵⁶ For instance, let us imagine that Billy and Jimbob each can make 100 snow cones in an hour. When working together, Billy and Jimbob can make 300 snow cones. Most would think that if each can individually make 100, then together they should only be able to make $100+100 = 200$ snow cones. That is not the case. The collaboration of Billy and Jimbob enable them to make more than just their individual energies added together—synergy!

Synergy within and between teams of people and organizations is vital when wanting to progress towards seemingly impossible goals. There is a counterintuitive aspect of working together that was identified by Scott E. Page in his book *The Difference*. Dr. Page is an American social scientist who has received the John Seely Brown Distinguished Professor of Complexity, Social Science and Management at the University of Michigan. Dr. Page said:

I stumbled on a counterintuitive finding: diverse groups of problem solvers—groups of people with diverse tools—consistently outperformed groups of the best and the brightest. If I formed two groups, one random (and therefore diverse) and one consisting of the best individual performers, the first group almost always did better. In my model, diversity trumped ability.⁵⁷

The Difference goes on to show that the diverse team must be unified in the essential mission to achieve better results than a homogenous team of experts. This shows two things: 1.) It is not only important to be working together, but it is also important to be working together with people who are different. 2.) It is not only important to be working

⁵⁶Oxford, Lexico 2021, accessed March 13, 2021, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/synergy>.

⁵⁷ Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 231, Kindle Edition.

together with people who are different, but it's also important to be working together with people who are unified despite their differences.

Jesus prayed for this type of synergistic unity within the Body of Christ in John 17 because He is the one who created the principle of synergy. The Body of Christ is not supposed to separately add our work together to get the great commission done. No! The Body of Christ is supposed to collaborate with the same kind of oneness with which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit collaborate. The Body of Christ is supposed to collaborate with each other in a oneness empowered by the Holy Spirit working in and through us. This type of synergy will unite our separate functions as if it were a massive Human Body that spanned the Globe with one mind, the mind of Christ, and one mission, Global Evangelization.

It Was Always the Plan

Global takeover for the Kingdom of God by mankind was always the plan. It was and is a family plan. God blessed Adam and Eve telling them to be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.⁵⁸ Adam and Eve were to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven, extending the order and excellence of the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. They were to do this as led by God through intimate relationship with God. This way of life would start with Adam and Eve in the Garden, then multiply through their offspring all over the earth. It was to be a blissful world of God and man in connected loving relationship... but man chose differently.

⁵⁸ Genesis 1:28.

Because God is love, He created mankind for a loving relationship with himself.

One cannot have a love-based relationship without the choice not to love. Mankind can be forced to fear but must choose to love. Therefore, God gave mankind a choice. God gave mankind the opportunity to choose God or to choose himself.

God placed two trees on the earth that were very special and very significant.

One was the Tree of Life, and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree of Life represented God himself because in God is life.⁵⁹ The fruit of this tree is Jesus. The flesh of the fruit is Jesus's body, and the juice of the fruit is his blood. Remember, it was Jesus who said, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."⁶⁰ Jesus also said, "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me." To eat of the Tree of Life was to have eternal life, and to have eternal life is to know God.⁶¹ To know God is to love Him because God is Love. To love God is to obey His commands.⁶² Obedience to God's will over man's own will is part of man having a loving relationship with God.

Watchman Nee spoke of the choice God gave Adam in the Garden of Eden between the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil this way:

Choosing the way of the Spirit, the way of obedience, he could become a 'son' of God, living in dependence upon God for his life; or, taking the natural course, he could put the finishing touch to himself, as it were, by becoming a self-dependent

⁵⁹ John 1:4.

⁶⁰ John 6:53-54.

⁶¹ John 17:3.

⁶² John 14:15, 14:21

being, judging and acting apart from God. The history of humanity is the outcome of the choice he made.⁶³

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would give Adam the ability to choose right from wrong independently of God. This would awaken Adam's senses to morality and would allow him to be totally dependent on himself in life's decisions. Partaking of the fruit of this tree would enable a self-life. In contrast, partaking of the fruit of The Tree of Life would mean Adam's source of life would be God himself. After eating of The Tree of Life Adam would be dependent on God and his relationship with God for decisions in life. He would be destined to a life of dependency, a life of partnership with God. After eating of The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam would be able to live independent from God by having a heightened sense of morality. He would be able to choose what he deemed as good even if it was different from what God deemed as good. Independence from God, who is life, results in death.

God gave Adam and Eve one command, not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. To obey would inevitably result in choosing to eat from the Tree of Life. To obey was to choose God's life over self-life. To obey was to love because love is demonstrated in choosing another's will over one's own. To disobey was to choose self. To disobey was to choose death. Satan enticed mankind to choose self over God just as he had. Adam fell for the satanic ploy and chose self.⁶⁴ In doing this, mankind forfeited rule and dominion to that which was now certain to enslave him, sin and death. "Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners."⁶⁵

⁶³ Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1977), 74.

⁶⁴ Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, 114.

⁶⁵ Romans 5:19.

Notice that the above verse says, “the MANY were made sinners”. Adam and Eve did indeed multiply. In doing so, their tendency, now mankind’s nature, to choose self-will and not God’s multiplied too. Instead of being ambassadors of the Kingdom of Light all throughout the world, mankind became ambassadors of the Kingdom of Darkness.⁶⁶

Mankind’s nature to disobey led him to disobey the order to fill the whole earth. In Genesis 11 we see mankind unifying under the banner of self to oppose God’s command. Just as the characteristics of the artist can be found in the art, flawed as it may be, the characteristics of the creator could still be found in His creation. The characteristic to connect, unify and synergize showed itself in the Tower of Babel. In Genesis 11:4 they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” Although this unity and synergy is a characteristic of the designer in the art, this time it was used by mankind in direct disobedience to God’s command to fill the earth.⁶⁷ Disobedience is the result of pride, and God opposed their pride and scattered mankind over the earth.⁶⁸

“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners...”⁶⁹ As mankind scattered all over the earth, their heart for disobedience scattered all over the earth. The original intention of a synergistic unity between God and man, and between mankind and one another as they spread throughout the earth,

⁶⁶ Ephesians 5:18.

⁶⁷ Genesis 1:28.

⁶⁸ James 4:6.

⁶⁹ Romans 5:19.

was tainted. Mankind needed to be saved from his nature towards disobedience, a nature that came from Adam.

"For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also, through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."⁷⁰ Jesus is God's answer to man's disobedience. What man could not do, God did by sending His Son. Jesus, being fully God, became fully man by being born of a virgin. He lived the perfect life, never once disobeying his Father in heaven. He was perfectly righteous and displayed His righteousness by following God's law completely. The payment for sin is death. Part of Jesus's mission was to pay mankind's sin debt with his own perfect life, forever paving the way for mankind's rebellion to be redeemed. This payment of Jesus's blood would wash away the stain of disobedience allowing for restored relationship between God and man.

Jesus obeyed fully—he suffered and died on a roman cross for all of mankind. The payment for sin is death; therefore, Jesus paid the price for mankind's sin fully. The beautiful twist is this: because Jesus himself had no sin; death could not keep him in the grave. Jesus resurrected from the Grave by the power of His indestructible sinless life!⁷¹ He defeated sin and death for all of mankind. By His obedience many of mankind, those who choose to trust God, will be made righteous!⁷²

After Jesus's resurrection, He commanded the disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 saying:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

⁷⁰ Romans 5:19.

⁷¹ Hebrews 7:16; Romans 8:10-11.

⁷² Romans 4:5.

Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

This command is significant. It is reminiscent of the command given to the first Adam in the Garden of Eden, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”⁷³ As previously discussed, the first Adam’s descendants rebelled and came together to make the tower of Babel. They unified in their rebellion and God opposed them. Now, Jesus, the second Adam, gave a similar command as quoted in the verses above. He gave this command to his spiritual descendants, those born again who now are sons and daughters of God.⁷⁴ The essence of his command is the same, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” To be fruitful, they must make disciples who make disciples.

The only way to effectively fill the earth is to have disciples who are multiplying in every tribe, tongue and nation. For these disciples, called the Church, to multiply like this, they must be connected across national, lingual and cultural divides, learning from one another, unifying and synergizing. This type of global synergy implies a deeper connection than humanly possible. It implies a connection that mirrors the interconnectedness and interdependence between ecosystems in nature, a connection so complex that only God could be the one to orchestrate it and maintain it. God has made a way for such a connection. The bond is in the blood of Christ which washes every Christian clean and through the Spirit of Christ who fills every Christian with the heart and mind of Christ.⁷⁵ It is this mind shift that needs to happen. According to

⁷³ Genesis 1:28.

⁷⁴ John 1:12-13.

⁷⁵ Ezekiel 11:19; 1 Corinthians 2:16.

Romans 12:2, the way we live our lives is transformed by the renewing of the mind, which is the changing of the way we think. With respect to unity and the way we think, Dr. Tennent says, “We must learn to think of ourselves as members of a massive global Christian movement that is looking more and more like John’s vision in Revelation 7:9, which encompasses people from every nation, tribe, people, and language.”⁷⁶

Jesus is the light of the world. Walk in the light as He is in the light and you WILL have fellowship one with another. This kind of global fellowship is our mandate by the Holy Spirit in answer to Jesus’s prayer in John 17:23,

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that You have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.

As individual Christians connect and unite locally, they are more effective at spreading the light of Christ throughout their local municipality with the collective abilities in their local church. As local churches connect and unite with other local churches regionally and throughout the globe, the Global Church will be more effective at spreading the light of Christ throughout the world. The mandate to make disciples of all nations requires every local church to become more connected to the Global Church. Every local church can be a globally connected church. This is not impossible. If Jesus commanded it, the Holy Spirit will enable it. The question is, are you and I willing to take the next step?

⁷⁶ Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 269.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Globally Connected Church is not a new idea. Two thousand years ago Jesus prayed for the church to be one as Himself, the Holy Spirit, and the Father are one. A Globally Connected Church is God's idea. It is God's will. We also know that it is God who works in us creating both the desires and the ability to fulfill His good purposes.¹ Consequently, God has been working into His people the desire to overcome the divisiveness tainting the Bride of Christ. Christ will have a Bride who is without spot or wrinkle. He rids us of the spots and wrinkles by the washing of the water of His Word. The Holy Spirit has been washing The Bride of Christ with The Word of Christ from her beginning. One way of accomplishing this task is by working into His people both the desire and the ability to write His will. When these individuals submit to God's task, they play a part in sowing seeds of unity which results in the Global Body of Christ becoming more connected.

There are many authors who have done such writing in the past 2000 years. The body of work that could inform this thesis project is much too expansive to exhaustively read. However, the following books each played a part in helping me to understand the necessity of each local church being increasingly connected to the Global Body of Christ. This is not just a need; it is God's plan. A Globally Connected Church is essential to the world knowing Jesus. God not only puts the desires in us to carry out His plan, but He also shows us how to do it, and He enables us to take those steps. Our role is

¹ Philippians 2:13.

responding with “Yes Lord.” The following works each informed aspects of how one arrives at the conclusion that every local church should be in the pursuit of a deeper connection to the Global Body of Christ.

Our Global Families²

Christian! That is our identity as followers of Christ Jesus. The title “Christian” delineates a family connection that runs deeper than denominational ties, cultural ties, geographical ties, and even traditional familial ties. Jesus’s blood unifies the 2.4 billion self-proclaimed Christians throughout the globe—at least it should. Too often Christians cluster in groups based on theology, gender, age, ethnicity, education, and/or economic status, while freely criticizing those that don’t look like them, act like them, and/or disagree with them. Christians then glorify missions to the people in the world unreached by Jesus only to send missionaries to mostly tribal and Christian areas. “This unbalanced practice has left 90% of the 3 largest non-Christian religions in the world, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist, having never personally met a Christian.”³

In order to reach the world for Jesus, Christians must learn how to have solidarity with one another, with other religions and with humanity itself. How can one effectively evangelize someone with whom they have never had any interaction? Dr. Todd Johnson and Cindy Wu define solidarity as “unity based on a shared vision of valuing one another and working together, despite religious differences, *for the common good.*”⁴ One can befriend people of other religions without capitulating on Christian beliefs. A

² Todd M., Johnson and M. Cindy Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), Kindle Edition.

³ Johnson and Wu, *Our Global Families*, 140, Kindle Edition.

⁴ Johnson and Wu, *Our Global Families*, 2559, Kindle Edition.

strong Christian identity is one that loves the neighbor, for it is the kindness of God that leads a man to repentance. A holistic perspective on relationships with people of other denominations and of other faiths includes gospel sharing, mutual listening, suffering, study, dialogue, cooperation, and friendship.

Life in the Trinity⁵

The title of this book may sound heretical to many Sunday morning church goers. How could any mere human understand what life in the Trinity is like? How could someone think that people are invited to experience aspects of the Holy Trinitarian bond? Yet this is exactly what Donald Fairbairn explains using the writings and theology of at least 4 early church fathers including: Irenaeus of Lyons, Athanasius of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo and Cyril of Alexandria. “God created us to share in this relationship and gave us a share in the communion of the Trinity at creation. This was the primary thing that we lost through the Fall.”⁶ History is God’s story of bringing mankind back into this relationship. Because of Jesus, mankind can be restored to this relationship through faith. Those that live in this faith receive the Holy Spirit who unites us with Jesus and invites us into the Father-Son relationship both individually and as a church body. The Christian Life is ultimately a reconnection with God’s-Life. The early church fathers titled this theology *theosis*.

Understanding theosis is essential for unity in the body of Christ. It is God’s life in us that is the basis for unity between Christians. We are not to be mere imitators of the love of Jesus. We are to remain in His love and realize that we have the very same love

⁵ Donald Fairbairn, *Life In The Trinity: An Introduction to Theology With The Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 3964, Kindle Edition.

⁶ Fairbairn, *Life In The Trinity* 3962, Kindle Edition.

of the Father in us that Jesus has and had in Him. That love is in us through the Holy Spirit. This love bonds us together in a unity that is much deeper and much more connected than we now comprehend. The same life and love of Christ that is in you, assuming the reader is Christian, is the same life and love of Christ that is in me. This supernatural love and life connect us more deeply than any natural and physical connection. When we receive this by faith, there is nothing that can disconnect our bondedness other than ignorance or unbelief.

God the Father wants to glorify himself throughout the world. He is seeking to be glorified, not to bask in his own greatness, but to share it. The way that He shares His glory is by inviting people into eternal life. Eternal life is not “the sweet by and by” as sung about by many a hymn. Dr. Fairbarin writes, “Eternal life is knowing Christ and his Father, God. At the heart of the central idea of Christianity lies the reality that Christians will know the Father and the Son.”⁷ Dr. Fairbairn continues, “The glory of God is connected to the presence of God with his people, and this presence is uniquely shown in the entrance of his one and only Son into the world.”⁸ Jesus entered into the world, died, and arose in order to make a way for God to live inside of us eternally. As Christians, in the same way that the Father is in Christ and Christ is in the Father, we are in the Father and the Son, and the Son and the Father are in us. The Father glorifies himself in us by revealing himself to us. He glorifies himself through us, by revealing himself through us. This happens most effectively when Christians realize their being in God makes them unified with one another. This is a unity that is based on much more than merely purpose, direction, mindset, compatibility, or any other trivial

⁷ Fairbairn, *Life In The Trinity*, 726, Kindle Edition.

⁸ Fairbairn, *Life In The Trinity*, 543, Kindle Edition.

factors. Christian unity includes those things, but they are trivial compared to the basis of our unity which is love. Since God is love, the basis for our unity is God himself. The more we understand His Love, the more we walk in unity. The more we walk in unity, the more He is glorified through us and throughout this world.

Transforming Mission⁹

This book helps one to understand the need for a paradigm shift in the Global Church's thinking of the *Missio Dei*, the Mission of God. For many churches, there is simply a "missions department". If there is a pastor or leader that leads the "missions department" and takes a group of people on a missions trip at least once a year, while financially supporting the missionary in their cross-cultural work, then that church checks the box of missions. It can now revert its focus back to the other important daily tasks. This paradigm must go. It is simply not enough for churches to think about involvement in missions. Churches must shift the paradigm from multiple churches on multiple missions to the singular mission of God is His Global Church!

For the above paradigm shift to fully happen, then one must also recognize that unity is central to the *Missio Dei*. The Global Body of Christ does not have to become unified; in Christ it is unified. It has been unified since Pentecost. To walk out this unity, individual aspects of the church must transform their lives from disunity to unity by renewing their minds to the reality of what Scripture says is true. Striving to live in this unity and striving for truth causes tension in relationships. Stretching is necessary, for without stretching there cannot be growth. Stretchmarks show that the Body of Christ

⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books), 2011.

understands that unity does not mean uniformity. Unity requires the type of love that does not seek its own and humbly repents when it does. South African Missiologist David Bosch says, “We have to confess that the loss of ecclesial unity is not just a vexation but a sin. Unity is not an optional extra. It is, in Christ, already a fact, a given.”¹⁰

Unity in diversity with Jesus Christ at the center is the way forward. For this to happen, the Global Body of Christ must put aside its preferences and build relationships across cultural divides with “the others” in the Body of Christ. Relationships require communication. Effective communication requires both talking and listening. Healthy global conversation within the church paradigm, can manifest in sending and receiving. Gone is the paradigm of the West sending its Gospel mindset to the rest of the world with no need to learn from them. For the western church to mature into all that God has for it, it must learn to learn from those that it has notoriously seen as theologically less than. Without the willingness to listen, there will only be more schism. Bosch puts it this way:

This Protestant virus may no longer be tolerated as though it is the most natural thing in the world for a group of people to start their own church, which mirrors their foibles, fears, and suspicions, nurtures their prejudices, and makes them feel comfortable and relaxed.¹¹

The West must no longer strive to create independent church plants. Interdependence is the way, for, “It is the glory of the teacher to sit and learn at the feet of the student.”¹²

¹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 165.

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 459.

¹² About 7 years ago Rick Lee, one of my mentors and a dear friend, told me of this quote and that he thought he heard it from Dr. Robert E. Coleman. I could not find the origin of the quote, but wherever it came from, it has made an impact on me.

The Normal Christian Life¹³

A normal Christian life is not made up of our efforts to attain to the “*gold Christian standard*” of normalcy in religious life. A normal Christian life is defined by the life that is within a Christian. Mankind is either moved by self-life or by God’s life. It is no longer a matter of being good enough or getting rid of enough bad. It is a matter of whether or not one is a brother of Christ and thereby a son of God.

A dog that is adopted as the family pet will never be a son.¹⁴ It can be like a son to the owner. It can at times bring some of the same emotions of a son to the owner. Still, it can never be a son because the dog does not have the nature of the owner within itself. It can only ever be a dog and never a human son. In the Garden of Eden, mankind had the opportunity to eat of the Tree of Life. If mankind would have done so, mankind would have had the life and nature of the Heavenly Father inside of him and would have become a son. Mankind chose instead to eat of the other tree, The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This allowed man and woman to choose for themselves what is good and evil apart from what God says is good and evil. This independence from God’s life resulted in death. Mankind could try to be good or could remain bad, but either way, mankind would only ever be man and woman, never sons and daughters of God. “Our only hope as men is to receive the Son of God, and when we do so His life in us will constitute us sons of God.”¹⁵

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, is the manifest life of the Father. He was the Tree of Life in the Garden. Those who receive Him receive the very life of God.

¹³ Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Fort Washington: CLC Publications, 2012), Kindle Edition.

¹⁴ I am drawing from a powerful analogy that Watchman Nee explains in the book using Fido and Mr. Wong. It is found on page 78.

¹⁵ Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, 78, Kindle Edition.

They are given the right to become sons of God, sons whom Jesus is unashamed to call brethren. These sons of God, Christians, have the very life of the Father in them. They are united by the life of the Father through the Holy Spirit in the same way that one person's body is united by his own life. Christians, though many, make up one body.

To the extent that one thinks they are still of the Tree of Good and Evil, they will make decisions based on what is best for self. To the extent that one understands they have the life of Christ flowing through them, they then understand that the same life of Christ is flowing through other Christians and other groups of Christians. Their decisions fade from individualistic concerns to what is best for the Body of Christ as a whole. Their hopes and desires broaden to taking care of the whole body of which they are a part instead of only nursing their one member.

The crucifixion was much more than just redemption for those who would accept it. It was also the birth of something. In Genesis 2, before sin came into the world, God put Adam to sleep. Adam could not die here because death is only said in the context of sin; therefore, Adam went into a deep sleep. Out of this deep sleep, and out of Adam, came his bride—Eve. She had his nature for she was in him and now is of him. In the same way, Christ went into a deep sleep on the cross. Death was there because Jesus became our sin. Yet for the purpose of birth, he had never sinned and was in the type of deep death sleep out of which comes life. Then out of his side the bride of the second Adam was birthed—The Church.¹⁶

¹⁶ This paragraph is explained more powerfully and in more detail on pages 139-147 under the subheadings *The Love of Christ* and *One Living Sacrifice of The Normal Christian Life*.

The Church is one because it as a whole came from Jesus and is of Jesus! The parts of the Church are members of one another, and together they make up the spotless Bride of Christ that is cleansed by His Word. She is radiant, spotless, and without wrinkle. She is free from condemnation. She is to be extended into the whole earth for she is more than a conqueror and can never be destroyed.

The Difference¹⁷

Diversity is a big deal! There is logic to it. The science and logic of diversity show that on average a diverse group of people perform better than a homogenous group of people. There are various variables that play into whether or not that will be the case with any specific group of people. Even so, there is a reason that corporations spend billions and billions of dollars to make their employees sit through diversity trainings. Diversity used the right way causes more innovation and higher production. Science proves it.

In speaking on his study of diversity Page says,

I stumbled on a counterintuitive finding: diverse groups of problem solvers—groups of people with diverse tools—consistently outperformed groups of the best and the brightest. If I formed two groups, one random (and therefore diverse) and one consisting of the best individual performers, the first group almost always did better. In my model, diversity trumped ability.¹⁸

Diversity used the right way is key. For diversity within a team to cause higher innovation and production, the team must be diverse in background, skills, ethnicity, and/or many other collections of characteristics. There is one caveat; the diversity

¹⁷ Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Kindle Edition.

¹⁸ Page, *The Difference*, 231, Kindle Edition.

cannot include fundamental preference. The desired outcome or the way that individuals fundamentally prefer to get to the desired outcome must be similar. If there is difference between the team in fundamental preferences, lower performance and schism are the outcome. If highly diverse teams can put aside their non-fundamental preferences and learn to work together towards a shared goal, then the output of that diverse team will usually far outshine the output of a homogenous team.

This book mathematically proves the above through various studies done. Diversity matters. The book however fails to relate the importance of its study to the Church. If we apply the findings of the book to the Global Church, we see the importance of Jesus's prayer in John 17:22-23, "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." As the Global Church, our unity is based on Jesus. Our end goal is knowing Him and making Him known throughout the world. Each aspect of the Church must learn to deny itself and submit one to another so that we can have unity in our vast diversity. Then we will be more effective than ever at helping the world to know Jesus. Jesus actually says in his prayer that the Church becomes one SO THAT the world will know! The proven principle that the difference diversity creates within a team can be used to create a better outcome than a team with a lack of diversity, is a principle that God put into nature for a purpose! When will the Church recognize that a talented "I" and a talented "they" can become an even more talented "we?"

Wikichurch¹⁹

This book is based on the amazing efficacy of a Globally Connected Church called Victory Church which started in the Philippians. The founder, Pastor Steve Murrell, approaches ministry in the same way that Wikipedia approaches online encyclopedia articles.

Wikipedia started as a feeder system for Nupedia, a website dedicated to producing scholarly articles written by experts. In 3 years, the experts had only written and reviewed 24 articles.²⁰ The in-depth process was painstakingly slow, especially when compared to the feeder system, Wikipedia. Wikipedia's process was different. They crowd sourced the information. Anyone could write an article. In the first year, Wikipedia produced 20,000 articles.²¹ An independent survey showed that most of the non-expert written Wikipedia articles are as accurate as traditional encyclopedia entries written by recognized experts. When comparing Wikipedia's record of 20,000 entries in one-year verses Nupedias 24 entries in three years, the better option was obvious.

For too long local churches have had the Nupedia mindset instead of the Wikipedia mindset. Churches and “clergy” operate in a “ministry is only for the trained expert” system. One cannot do the work of ministry until they have gone to seminary for three years, have a degree, and have been ordained by others that have done the same. The problem is this process for entering ministry is not biblical.

¹⁹ Steve Murrell, *Wikichurch: Making Discipleship Engaging, Empowering and Viral* (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 2011), Kindle Edition.

²⁰ Murrell, *Wikichurch* , 4.

²¹ Wikipedia.com, “History of Wikipedia,” accessed April 3, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wikipedia.

Ephesians 4:11-13 show a different process. Christ gave the Apostles, the Prophets, the Evangelists, the Pastors and the Teachers for a specific purpose. The purpose was not to DO the work of ministry. The purpose is found in verse 12: it is to equip believers, your mere ordinary lay people, to do the works of ministry. For too long believers wait on the leader to do ministry when it is the leader's role to equip them for ministry. Ministry is not for the experts; it is for the common Christian! If the leaders of the church would do their primary role of equipping, many more people in the world would experience ministry. Ephesians 4:13 builds on verse 12, saying this equipping of the lay people for ministry should happen until we all reach unity and maturity. This means that "common Christians" should not wait until maturity to minister. They mature as they minister to others. They should not wait until there is unity to minister either. They mature and they unify as they minister.

The system for many in the Global Church is backwards. The Global Church is supposed to be made up of many "Wikichurches"—Churches that equip every Christ follower as a minister of the Gospel in their daily lives.

Leading Change²²

John Kotter's book on leading change has nothing to do with the Global Church. It is about leading change in large organizations, companies that are big enough to have upper and mid-level management managing employees who then provide a service to a customer. Within these large companies, righting a sinking ship is a hard and long process. Changing the way things have always been done is not easy.

²² John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), Kindle Edition.

Change requires conflict. There are usually casualties when bringing about major change. These casualties include people being fired and systems that were once held dear needing to be released to the annals of history. The principles in this book are very much applicable to the major change that needs to take place in the connectivity of the Global Church.

If one imagines the Global Church as an outrageously large organization with many different departments operating worldwide, then one can see the disjointedness of the Global Church as more of an issue. Afterall, do we not have the same mission as the one Body of Christ—making disciples of every tribe, tongue and nation as we go about our day to day lives? With this view, one can easily see that change in our Global Organization is needed. Our product, Jesus Christ, is flawless, but our means of delivery is the issue. Inwardly focused departmental cultures, paralyzing bureaucracy, parochial politics, a low level of trust, a lack of teamwork, arrogant attitudes, a lack of leadership in middle management, and the general human fear of the unknown all lead to a snail like crawl towards the accomplishment of our mission. A method must be designed to address these issues and address them well so that our Global “organization” can more effectively make disciples.

John Kotter establishes an eight-stage process that has proven to be effective for secular organizations, and the principles of said process could be used to help the Global Church to make more unified and intentional steps forward. The eight stages of change are as follows: Establish a sense of urgency, create a guiding coalition, develop a vision and a strategy, communicate the change vision, empower employees (every

Christian) for broad-based action, generate short-term wins, consolidate gains, produce more change, and anchor new approaches in the culture.²³

There are many “guiding coalitions” that have been created in Global Christianity in the last century or two. The Lausanne Movement is a great example. Christian leaders from many different regions of the world come together in order to unify and try to make steps forward in Christianity’s collective mission. The sense of urgency seems to be increasingly within the hearts of many Christian leaders. The efforts for making a guiding coalition are increasingly there. The vision is written in the employee handbook which was written by 40 authors across three continents over 2000 years—The Bible. Improvement on the aforementioned stages of change is needed. As these areas are improved, the leap to the next phase of leading change must take place. Without empowering every Christian for broad-based action, the mission and vision will continue to be delayed in its accomplishment. A Globally Connected Church is globally connected not just based on its leaders, but also based on the overlapping of each of its members. In many cases the members will connect the leaders. This unity will happen as the leaders release the members to do ministry, instead of a structure that requires the members to bring people to the leaders to be ministered to.

The New Shape of World Christianity²⁴

Christianity is not a white man’s religion. Christianity is not a Western or European religion—not even close! It is very likely that this past Sunday, more

²³ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 21. This is a summary of figure 2-2 on page 21.

²⁴ Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009), Kindle Edition.

Christians attended church in China than in all of Christian Europe. This past Sunday there were more members of Brazil's Pentecostal Assemblies of God at church than in a combined total of the two largest United States Pentecostal denominations, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Christ.²⁵ The Christian World today looks very different than it did a century or two ago, and that is a good thing. It is a God thing!

There is a world-wide revival going on, and if our eyes are too focused on the bad circumstances that are shown on our favorite cable news channel, we just might miss it. Close to half of the Christian believers who have ever lived are alive right now and most of them are from Latin America or Africa!²⁶ The norms of Christianity are shifting. Jesus is incarnating the Gospel into cultures all around the world. The Bible is being translated into more and more languages, showing that each language and each people group is worth God's attention. More than ever before we have a Global Christianity where each region of the world needs the other to effectively move forward in reaching the rest of the world for Jesus.

Sending missionaries to start works in unreached people groups is vital yet keeping the missionaries there after the work has been founded is not as necessary. Christianity seems to do best when it becomes local. The local appropriation of Christianity by local people for local reasons in the context of local cultural realities is statistically the strongest way forward. For the whole world to come to hear the Gospel, these local Christians, wherever they be in the world, must have a global vision. One does not have to stop being American, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Brazilian, or etc. to be a Christian. "The Gospel that communicates dignity to each believer from whatever

²⁵ Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity*, 158, Kindle Edition.

²⁶ Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity*, 170, Kindle Edition.

culture, calls each Christian to join all others in praising the universal rule of God in Christ.”²⁷ This appreciation of heritage combined with the understanding of a citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven causes a love and willingness to lay down our lives for other cultures to be able to understand the good news of the Gospel of Grace that so graciously saved our own people!

The New Faces of Global Christianity²⁸

For a North American Christian, it can be a surprising and humbling experience to read parts of the Bible and to try to understand how they might be read in communities elsewhere in the world. Throughout, we need to think communally rather than individually. We must also abandon, however temporarily, familiar distinctions between secular and supernatural dimensions.²⁹

Christianity is global! The Christians in the Global North, specifically America and Europe, must wake up to this fact. Christianity is growing much more rapidly in the Global South than in the Global North. Living things grow. No longer should the Global North view African, Latin American, or Asian Christians as having a Christianity that is somehow less knowledgeable or less mature than their own. Christianity in the Global South is not “a mile wide but only an inch deep”. If this were the case, the Muslim Background Believers and Hindu Background Believers would not be willing to die for their faith, yet many are! Many are giving up their respect in society, deciding it more important to receive Jesus and be born again than to maintain social status or familial

²⁷ Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity*, 1885, Kindle Edition.

²⁸ Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press), Kindle Edition.

²⁹ Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 182, Kindle Edition.

safety. In many ways, it is time that the Global North Christians begin to learn from the Christians of the Global South.

The modernized cultures of American and European Christians cause a unique set of issues when trying to understand the principles of the Scripture which were written 2000 years before many of the modern comforts. Reading these same verses through the eyes of someone who does not have access to nor know that penicillin exists causes a different understanding and brings a different type of hope. Faith in Jesus for healing is necessary for the person from a Global South tribe with no access to a doctor. For the American and European, faith in Jesus for healing is a convenience since they would not have to have surgery or take a certain regimen of medicine. It is harder for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to walk through the eye of the needle. Much of the Global North culture causes the Global North human to trust in the richness of mankind's innovation rather than faith in the Word of God. Why would a Global North person believe demons exist when science confidently teaches they can diagnose almost every mental illness and medicate the symptoms with psychiatric drugs and therapy?

People naturally read Scripture through the lens of culture. This can cause compromise when it comes to many topics such as the inerrancy and authority of The Bible and what is good and what is evil in this modern world. What would happen if a typical American or European Christian read the Bible through the lens of someone who grew up in a culture where animal sacrifice was still practiced, where golden idols were found in most households, or where becoming a Christian ensured poverty and physical persecution? Theologically, the Global North Christians have much to relearn from

Global South Christians about faith, especially faith in the midst of trial. How can a local church in the suburbs of West Palm Beach, Florida, truly understand some of these faith principles without sitting at the feet of a Muslim or Hindu Background Believer and listening to learn? Part of the process of the unification of the Global Church is the communication between the Global North and the Global South. Communication involves both listening and talking. It is time for the Global North to learn to listen more and for the Global South to be requested to speak up. The maturity of the Global Body of Christ requires the Global South to have its rightful seat at the table.

Landmark Essays in Mission and Global Christianity³⁰

“The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle”

“It may be true that ‘men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers,’ but that is irrelevant. Membership in the body of Christ is not a question of likes or dislikes, but a question of incorporation into a new humanity under the lordship of Christ.”³¹ The New Testament shows a beautiful picture of unity, of oneness. There is a oneness for those who have been born again that transcends all other outward distinctions. This oneness is to be found in and through the Church.

According to the Bible, there are two major classes of people that transcend all other distinctions: those people that are in Adam and those people are in Christ. The people in solidarity with Adam are unified based on sin and death and judgement.

³⁰ C. Rene Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unity Principle," In *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, by Robert L. Gallagher & Paul Hertig (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), Kindle Edition.

³¹ Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unity Principle," 1688.

Jesus, the last Adam, created a new humanity where the original purpose of mankind is fulfilled. Those in Christ are unified based on the seal of the Spirit which now reconciles all of their differences. Differences such as race, gender, socioeconomic class, and religious background are no longer divide. This spiritual reality of oneness is to work itself out into a visible global community called the Church. Those in Christ are to be identifiable by their unified love for God and their unified love for one another. This is not a mere hope. Paul expresses this in his writings as fact, "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all."³²

Latin American Missiologist C. Rene Padilla goes on to show the examples of this oneness throughout the New Testament. Jesus unified an unlikely motley crew. In his band of disciples, he had a zealot and a publican, men and women, women of wealth and women of morally suspect reputation. Jesus unified them together based on himself. The Book of Acts stresses the unification of multiple cultures under the Lordship of Christ. In Acts chapter 2, we see the pouring out of the Spirit on a group of people that represents all flesh. The Bible takes great care to represent the great variety of lands, languages and cultures that were present for the Acts 2 birth of the Church. Later, the central hub of the Christian Church moved to Antioch, the then third largest city in the Roman Empire. This place was a proverbial soup of cultures in the ancient world and became a sending place for missionaries to take the Gospel to cultures all over the Roman Empire.

³² Colossians 3:11.

Jesus is not only relatable across culture; Jesus Christ unifies cultures by placing His Spirit within them. “Unity in Christ is far more than a unity occasionally expressed at the level of ‘the supracongregational relationship of believers in the total Christian body’; it is the unity of the members of Christ’s body, to be made visible in the common life of local congregations.”³³ That culture of seeking unity within local congregations will cause the local congregations themselves to seek unity between one another. The seeking of unity creates connection. These connections multiplied creates the reality of the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17.

Possible: A Blueprint for how we Change the World³⁴

How does change really happen? If many were to map out a process of change, they would start with the slow dawning of an idea, the gradual understanding of truth, and or the culmination of years of discipline. While there is a ring of truth to that method, many times change happens as the result of one’s life colliding with an action or idea that challenges their thought about the makeup of the world. That action could be immense suffering, radical compassion, or maybe even a hurtful insult. When a person’s or an organization’s values and beliefs are confronted by the positive or negative actions of another, that person or group of people can either change, or they reject the confronter as false, evil, or impossible.

It is interesting how Christianity requires one to have faith in what the current popular atheistic, scientific, and culturally logical worldview deems impossible. Many

³³ Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unity Principle," 1870.

³⁴ Stephan Bauman, *Possible: A Blueprint for Changing How We Change the World* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2015), Kindle Edition.

would say, “I have to see it to believe it!” What if that is actually backwards? What if you have to believe it in order to see it. Change on a global scale is possible. It is not only possible, but also biblical. Too often, though, Christians and Christian organizations are caught up in the mindset of the popular thinking that the impossible, specifically that which God says is His mission, will never happen. The best way for that style of thinking to change, is for the pessimistic thinker described above to run into someone living out the impossible. Their lives must be struck by the very impossible actions that they so deep-heartedly doubt. When struck, they will have to question if what they believe is actually impossible. They will either hold on to their belief, rejecting what they see as false or evil, or they will change and begin to live the impossible.

If this is the best way to change the world, then who would generate this situational spark? Who would be radically kind and compassionate in a way that the world has never known? Who would try to unite those that it has been assumed are hopelessly divided? God would! The way that he would do it is through His people here on earth—Christians! This is shown in the book by the following quote of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

The “extraordinary”—and this is the supreme scandal—is something which the followers of Jesus do. It must be done...so that all...can see it. It is not...some eccentric pattern of Christian living, but simple, unreflecting obedience to the will of Christ. If we make the “extraordinary” our standard, we shall be led into the passion of Christ, and its peculiar quality will be displayed [through us].³⁵

So how do we change the world? One Christian living as described above will make some waves and like ripples in a pond they will spread and be heard by many. Eventually, those ripples will spread too far to be effective. The world is a big place with

³⁵ Bauman, *Possible*, 100, Kindle Edition.

many cultures that have the uncanny ability to flatten any ripples of change. President and CEO of World Relief, Stephan Bauman details the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly in his book, *Possible*. This depiction is a beautiful description of how to change the world despite people's propensity to resist change.³⁶ As the caterpillar begins its sleep in the cocoon, new cells called "imaginal" cells begin to form. The caterpillar cells see these imaginal cells as enemies and begin to fight them off just as healthy cells would an infection or virus. The imaginal cells begin to cluster together in various parts of the caterpillar. Eventually, the clusters of imaginal cells are big enough that they begin to brush up against the other clusters of the imaginal cells from other parts of the caterpillar. When enough of these clusters connect, at some point, this string of imaginal cells realizes it is all together something new. This realization is the dawn of change and the death of the old. Christians unifying together in little clusters called local churches, and those churches unifying together in a string that spans the earth is the beginning of realizing God's command to multiply and fill the earth.

Theology in the Context of World Christianity³⁷

We are alive right now in one of the seams of Church History. A time where a significant page is turning from one way of doing things to another. This same type of seam happened when the Global Church transitioned from the persecuted mass to the celebrated norm as it became the empirical religion of Rome under the emperor Charlemagne. A similar type of page turning in Church History began when Martin

³⁶ Stephen Bauman's full depiction of the process of metamorphosis, including the imaginal cells, can be found on pages 103 and 104 of his book, *Possible*.

³⁷ Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), Kindle Edition.

Luther nailed the now famous 95 thesis on the door of The Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The seam of Church History is this: we are seeing the transition of the majority of the Global Christian Church from a so called western white man's religion, to a majority world religion.

The church in the Global South is rapidly growing, while many of the same denominations in the Global North and West are in decline. This is seen to the tune of only 1 million Anglicans attending church in Great Britain on any given Sunday in the year 2000 as compared to seventeen million Anglicans worshipping in Nigeria on that same Sunday.³⁸ The countries that were once the mission fields, are now sending missionaries to the very countries that shared the gospel with them.

This global shift began decades ago, yet the centers of theological education still remain in the western world.³⁹ Now, it's time to realize that the theological understandings of Christian Life will begin to shift too. Jesus still died and rose again. The apostolic creed is still the apostolic creed. These theological foundations should not and will not shift. One still must understand that the way someone growing up outside of the west understands the truths of the Bible and of Christian Life will be a bit different than those growing up in Western Culture. This is not a bad thing. We learned from the Jerusalem council that the gentile believers could remain committed to Christ while not forsaking aspects of their cultural background. Christ extends His Lordship into one's culture and the aspects of the culture that are not in line with the culture of the Kingdom of Heaven are done away with, while those that can remain do. Where is that line? The problem comes when one tries to enforce his own culture as Kingdom Culture. This is

³⁸ Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 6.

³⁹ Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 11.

what we must wrestle with moving forward. Unity in the Global Church requires Christians to learn from Christians of other cultures, testing other's and their own understandings against the backdrop of Scripture. Having the humility to listen to the Jesus follower whose ways are a bit outside of an assumed normal may just cause one to see Jesus more clearly. With the clearer picture of Jesus comes a deeper level of unity. This is vital for a deeper connection between the cultures within the Global Church.

Atlas of Global Christianity⁴⁰

In reflecting on the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, I am encouraged about the state of the Global Church. There are hundreds of millions more Christians today than there were 100 years ago. That is a BIG DEAL! Yes, there are many areas in which the Church can grow and develop, becoming more effective and more like Christ, but it is important to take a moment to really celebrate the growth of the body of Christ. Most books and statistics talk about the decline of the Church. In most areas, this is a decline in the growth rate of the church, but not necessarily an overall decline. For example, looking at the numbers of Protestants in the world today, every continent has millions more Protestants than they had 100 years ago.⁴¹ The percentage of Christians out of the overall population has declined, but there is still numerical growth.

When looking at the growth and decline of the church, there is an “elephant in the room” that denominations do not like to discuss: Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is rapidly growing and increasing in its percentage of the populace, while the other

⁴⁰ Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

⁴¹ Johnson and Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 91.

denominations are rapidly declining in the same statistic. This signals a breath of fresh air to the church. I believe that denominational churches need to learn the freedom found in the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. The Pentecostal/Charismatic churches would do well to learn to enter into dialogue with the other denominational churches. Overall, there is not a separate set of truths for the different types of churches. We have been baptized by one Spirit into one body!⁴² What if we talked to each other like loving brothers and sisters and ministered to the world together.

In its numbers, one must understand that *The Atlas of Global Christianity* takes into account the nominal Christians that claim to be Christians because they grew up in a Christian society. Admittedly, I don't know of a solution to the issue, but some of the statistics with respect to the number of Christians may not reflect the actual number of disciples of Christ. Many claim that they are Christian because they were taught what to say when others ask about religion. I wonder if this is left over from the colonialist mindset from decades past. Europeans crossed the oceans, declared themselves rulers, and declared whatever piece of land they were on as a Christian nation. Many forced Christianity on people. Now people claim that they are Catholic because they grow up in a Catholic society. Many people claim to be from a denomination because they were forced to go to church as a child. How could 81.2 percent of people be Christians in North America, when many of the people I meet on the street in the Bible-Belt do not understand what Jesus did for them? This shows that discipleship must be as ingrained in the spread of Christianity as Evangelism. Can one accomplish the Great Commission with just evangelism alone? No. We are to make disciples of every nation,

⁴² 1 Corinthians 12:13.

not people who merely claim they are Christians because they were told to do so. Unless we are unified with other Christians, how can we make effective disciples of Christ? A disciple-maker with a divided mindset is likely reinforcing the divisions that exist between the tens of thousands of denominations found throughout the Global Body of Christ. There must be a better way.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

The Body of Christ is global. Jesus Christ is not just for a certain region of the world, a certain people group, or a certain race. The Gospel is for all peoples; every tribe, tongue, and nation. I am convinced that every local part of the body of Christ must be connected in some way to the global whole and must be in the process of becoming more globally connected. Jesus Christ is the head of the Global Body of Christ. Any part of a human body that disconnects from the body will also be disconnected from the head of that body. In the same way, any local church that refuses to connect with other local churches and other aspects of the Body of Christ throughout the world is refusing to be connected to the head of the body, Jesus Christ. Renowned Missiologist David J. Bosch helped to make this point by referencing John XXII's speech at the opening of the 2nd Vatican Council on October 11, 1962. Bosch states, "He spoke on what had remained unaltered after almost two thousand years; namely, that Jesus Christ was still the center of the community and of life. It is this common foundation, this point of orientation, which enables us to engage in joint service and united witness in the world."¹

My thinking has been influenced by my background. I come from a rural church in Northeast Louisiana named The River of Life. It sits on the main highway on the outskirts of the largest town within a 30-mile radius, a town of with a population of less

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), Kindle Edition, 457-458.

than 5,000. This rural church has had significant engagement with the global church. The River of Life has helped to plant over 50 churches in India and many churches in Malawi. It holds pastors' conferences in many countries around the world. It facilitates multiple teams of indigenous pastors and indigenous leaders of pastor's networks whose lives and ministries have been so impacted by the relationship to The River of Life and its conferences, that they have begun to reproduce the conferences themselves throughout their respective nations. The River of Life is also teaching the indigenous pastors who have an affinity for business how to start and run effective businesses that help to fund the expansion of God's Kingdom within and around their nation. The River of Life is a church that is playing a part in the evangelization of the world through its various relationships with the global body of Christ. It is a Globally Connected Church!

I was sent from The River of Life in Louisiana to plant a church in Clearwater, Florida. With this rich global heritage, I began to wonder if my new little church plant could be globally connected as well. How did my previous local church in rural Louisiana connect with the work that God is doing in Africa, South Asia, East Asia, and more? Can my small local church begin to make an impact in the global body of Christ? Questions like these have led to this thesis project's research question: How can a local church become a more globally connected church? If I could discern some basic principles that local churches have used to successfully become more globally connected, then maybe I could help both my church plant and other churches to not only see the need for deeper connections to the global body of Christ, but also to see a clear path to the development of those deeper connections. Maybe answering the

question of how a local church becomes a more globally connected church will cause some local churches to confidently begin to take the action steps towards this, and in doing so, bring the Global Church closer to the fulfillment of the great commission. My initial hypothesis is that a local church becomes a globally connected church by having a globally connected leader and by becoming a relational church, a discipling church, a sowing church, and a going church.

Research Methodology

The Questionnaire

In order to learn how a local church becomes a globally connected church, I needed to find churches that were connected in multiple ways to the global Body of Christ, and then learn how those churches grew to be so globally connected. I decided the best way to do this was to create a short, confidential questionnaire that would identify the connectedness of a local church to other ministries and churches in the greater body of Christ. I called this questionnaire GCQ – Globally Connected Questionnaire. I targeted senior pastors thinking they would carry the heartbeat of the church. Afterall, it is widely said that the heart of the leader determines the heart of the organization.

In looking for churches that exemplified connectedness to the global body of Christ, I was looking for a specific type of connectedness. My Doctor of Ministry program track was an extensive study into the Global Church and Global Evangelization. The literature that I have read (see Chapter 3) has shown that a globally connected church does not merely give out what they have and what they know to the

rest of the world. That is part of being connected, but a true global connection in the Body of Christ is a two-way connection. Bosch emphasized the importance of mutual connection by saying, “For the sake of unity and of mission, we need new relationships, mutual responsibility, accountability, and interdependence (not independence!).”² Interdependence, according to Merriam Webster’s Dictionary, is the state of being dependent on one another: mutual dependence.³ A globally connected church is interdependent with the rest of the Body of Christ. It gives and receives from multiple connections to the greater Body of Christ.

I chose the questionnaire as the method for identifying globally connected churches for many reasons. One reason for the questionnaire is that it could be completely online. Online questionnaires are easy to quickly distribute to a high number of people. I used Google Forms to create the GCQ as an online form that could be emailed or texted to anyone I was hoping would participate in the research.

Another reason for the questionnaire came from our research methodology class. As research specialist, Dr. Brian Auday said, “Questionnaires are particularly adept at collecting information that might be sensitive.”⁴ Some of the questions that I planned on using, such as asking about the percentages of giving and where those moneys are spent, could be considered sensitive information. The anonymity option of the Google form potentially gave participants a greater willingness for greater transparency which would result in more accurate research.

² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Kindle Edition, 459.

³ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “interdependence,” accessed August 12, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interdependence>.

⁴ Brian Auday, *Research Methodology Module I*, Hamilton, 2009.

I have included the questionnaire in the appendixes. It has two parts. In part 1, each question is required. Part 1 is taken anonymously and has questions that will identify whether or not the church is a globally connected church. Part 2 is optional and gives the opportunity for the Pastor to participate in a semi-formal interview. I identified the most globally connected of those pastors who chose to fill out Part 2 and contacted them for a semi-formal interview.

In the questionnaire, questions 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13 were the criteria that I used to evaluate if the church was a globally connected church. These questions read as follows:

7.) What percentage of your church's budget is given to other ministries and churches? (This includes church plants, denominational boards, and oversight ministries. This does not include multisite campuses nor outreach ministries run by your church) *

- 0%
- 1-5%
- 6-9%
- 10%
- 11-15%
- >15%

9.) How many mission trips does your church go on per year? mission trip = a trip to another culture for the purpose of ministry. This can include the trip that you as senior pastor goes on if at least 1 non-family member from the church joins you.*

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

11.) How many other churches and/or other ministries does your church invest in financially each month? – This includes individual churches overseas and

church plants. (This does not include campuses of a multi-site church, nor does it include a denominational fund) *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- >10

12.) How many other churches is your church relationally invested in? – Your church knows the other church and your church gives knowledge, volunteers, and/or leaders for the purpose of helping their church to get better. (This includes domestically and internationally. This does not include campuses of a multi-site church) *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- >10

13.) How many people from other churches or ministries do you bring in to preach at your church each year? *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

Those churches that answered these questions with an adequate amount of the giving of their time, talents and treasure to the global body of Christ while simultaneously receiving from the same, were the churches I attempted to contact for a semi-formal interview with the senior pastor.

Question 7 asked how much the church was giving to other churches and ministries. An answer of 6% or more on question 7 showed that the church gave a significant percentage to the greater Body of Christ. The second step was an answer of 3-5 or more on Question 11. This answer in combination with an answer of 6% or more

on Question 7 showed that the church not only gave 6% or more of its finances away, but that it gave its finances to more than its direct oversight, such as a denominational fund. Churches that answered with at least 6% on Question 7 and at least 3-5 on Question 11 were categorized as churches that were connected financially to the greater body of Christ.

Questions 9, 12, and 13 all asked questions that gaged the relational connections of a church with people outside of its walls. Questions 12 and 13 measured the relational connectedness of a church with outside churches and ministries. Question 12 dealt with how a church serves those relationships, while question 13 dealt with how a church receives from those relationships. An answer of 1 or more on both Questions 12 and 13 showed that the church was at least beginning to give and receive relationally outside of its own namesake. This in combination with adequate answers on Questions 7 and 11 could mean that the church is in the process of becoming more globally connected. Question 9 measured how many mission trips the church went on per year. For the purpose of this project, a mission trip is any trip that the church takes to another culture outside of its own city for the purpose of ministry. This could be to another city or to another nation. An answer of 2 or more to question 9 qualified the church as a church that intentionally gave of its time and its talent across cultural lines. This answer of 2 or more also showed that the church likely saw the importance of connecting for either evangelism or service.

The rest of the questions were questions surrounding my hypothesis as to the actions and characteristics that lead a local pastor and local church to become more

globally connected. I hypothesize that for a local church to become more globally connected it must develop and grow in the following five characteristics:

- 1.) The church must have a leader that is relational, discipling, sowing, and going in their daily life.
- 2.) The church must be a relational church.
- 3.) The church must be a discipling church.
- 4.) The church must be a sowing church.
- 5.) The church must be a going church.

Those pastors that answered questions 7, 9, 11, 12, and 13 as specified above showed that their church was in line with a church that is giving and receiving from outside cultures and ministries and were considered to be globally connected regardless of whether or not they exemplified the characteristics that are identified by my hypothesis. The answers to the rest of the questions would show some evidence of why the church is a globally connected church. The semi-formal interviews of the most globally connected pastors would then identify how that church became as globally connected as it was and would either strengthen or weaken my hypothesis, as well as shed light on any other missing principles needed to be implemented to help a local church become more globally connected.

The Semiformal Interview

The design of this research project required me to work mostly with qualitative data. I chose to use the semi-formal interview as the primary form of gathering data for this research project with the questionnaire instrument being the research method that

informed me as to which pastors I should interview. The qualitative data would come from senior pastors recalling how their church became globally connected. “Less structured approaches allow the person interviewed much more flexibility of response...”⁵ The semi-formal interviews gave me the opportunity to hear and engage in the story of each church in a way that would have been impossible with a less relational form of research. The semi-formal interview is designed to allow the interviewer to ask and receive more complex and sophisticated questions and responses.⁶ I was able to ask clarifying questions and drill down on the principles that each pastor used in helping their church on the journey to becoming more globally connected.

The drawback of choosing this research method was the time it took to do an adequate number of interviews. Each interview was recorded, relistened to, transcribed, studied, coded, recoded, and from that process many memos were written about the relevant parts of each interview. Each pastor I interviewed had a busy schedule. Setting up the appointments and sometimes travelling to these appointments required much time. I am thankful for Zoom’s video conferencing technology. The majority of the interviews were done using Zoom which gave me the ability to more easily interview pastors in other parts of the continent and in other parts of the world. I am also thankful for Trint’s transcribing technology.⁷ I used Trint to fully transcribe all of the interviews that were completed.

⁵ Colin Robson, *Real World Research* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 269-270.

⁶ Brian Auday, *Research Methodology Module II*, Hamilton, 2009.

⁷ Trint is a website with transcription technology that can transcribe audio for up to 31 different languages and make the transcription editable, searchable, and sharable. You can find this resource at <https://trint.com>.

Each pastor that went through a semi-formal interview had already shown through the questionnaire that they might be leading a globally connected church. The goal of the semi-formal interview was to understand the story of how their church became globally connected. Did these globally connected churches become more globally connected because the leader was a globally connected leader? Were the globally connected churches growing more globally connected because they were relational, discipling, sowing and going as I had hypothesized? Were there other factors and/or characteristics in play that were shown to be a principle for each church's growth in their connection to the global body of Christ?

In the attached appendices one can find the list of questions that were sent out to each interviewee before the commencement of the interview. These questions were designed to not only show if my hypothesized characteristics were needed for growth in global connection, but also to show if there were other principles in play that helped in each church's global connectedness. Being that the interview was conducted as a semi-formal interview, the questions were used to guide the conversation. With each interview, I allowed the conversation to pull out valuable points in the pastor's own story and his story of the church that would not have been revealed if I had done a more formal interview or merely a questionnaire.

As I was in the process of completing these semi-formal interviews, I realized that I did not have a research method to follow when I was trying to understand what each interviewee was bringing to the table. I was obtaining a plethora of valuable qualitative data but had no experience drawing out the value of this data. This led to more research on how to research properly and ended with me utilizing Dr. Kathy

Charmaz's *Constructing Grounded Theory*⁸. Dr. Charmaz is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Faculty Writing Program at Sonoma State University in Northern California and has written extensively on the qualitative research method called Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory became the qualitative method I used to pull out the underlying principles these semi-formal interviews concealed. The Grounded Theory Method of research also became the way I shaped all subsequent interviews, as I had about four interviews left to finish at the time of discovering Grounded Theory. I am thankful for this method of research as it has greatly helped to steer the analysis and result of this project.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a collection of methods for qualitative research that allow the researcher to construct a plausible general principle or body of principles to explain phenomena.⁹ Dr. Charmaz describes grounded theory methods with the following:

Stated simply, grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus, researchers construct a theory 'grounded' in their data. Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis.¹⁰

The benefit of my using the grounded theory method is that it gave me a structured approach to analyzing and understanding my research data.

One concern I had in using the grounded theory method of research was that I already had some preconceived notions as to how a local church becomes a globally

⁸ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2014).

⁹ Included in my definition of grounded theory is the definition theory as found in Webster's Dictionary.

¹⁰ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 1.

connected church. Grounded theory encourages the researcher to put aside all opinions and prior personal experiences with the studied phenomena while allowing the research itself to blossom a theory grounded in the qualitative analysis of the data itself.

I read and studied deeply in my particular area of interest in preparation for the research. The benefit of this for grounded theory is the researcher is well versed in the language of the subject and can easily converse with interviewees, having a better understanding of the concepts and principles the interviewee is communicating through their stories. When discussing interviewing, Charmaz states, “Studying your data enables you to learn the nuances of your research participants’ language and meanings. If you attend to your participant’s language, you can bridge their experience with your research questions.”¹¹ The immersion in the subject before my interviews allowed for me to better understand the nuances of the vocabulary each interviewee used. It also allowed for me to pull out tacit meanings that I would not have been able to uncover if it were not for the prior research. The drawback is that the prior knowledge of a subject could easily cause one to see the data gathered from a preconceived perspective, completely missing or steering the analysis away from what it should have truly revealed. Charmaz shows that this prior study and understanding of the subject gives a starting vantage point. She goes on to say, “We may begin our studies from these vantage points but need to remain open to what we see and sense in our research. Treat earlier concepts and perspectives as subject to rigorous empirical and analytical scrutiny and possible dismissal from your study.”¹² Understanding that I had a certain worldview with respect to how a local church becomes a globally connected

¹¹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 100.

¹² Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 31.

church, allowed me to step outside of that worldview during the study. This then allowed me to better analyze the data that was gathered with the hope of creating a theory grounded in the research.

Grounded Theory starts with the gathering of data. Because I began to focus my research using Charmaz's grounded theory method after I had already completed two thirds of my semi-formal interviews, I was concerned that I may have to go back and redo all of the interviews. After further study, I found that grounded theorists can use a combination of informational, intensive, and investigative interviewing strategies in order to complete their gathering of the appropriate amount of data needed to understand phenomena.¹³

The goal of each interview I had conducted was to ask questions which helped stories to emerge naturally in conversation giving clarity to how and why the interviewee's church had become a globally connected church. This sounds like a great goal, but I needed to understand all three interviewing strategies to ensure I had conducted and was conducting my interviewing according to the rules of grounded theory. Informational interviewing focuses on gathering the information, the facts. It gathers the details of a situation giving, further understanding to the background and environment of the interviewee. Investigative interviewing seeks to uncover the motives behind phenomena but is more confrontational than intensive interviewing.¹⁴ Investigative interviewing reminds me of a detective questioning a witness and potential suspect of a crime. Intensive interviewing encourages planned questions because they make it easier for the interviewer to improvise without being confrontational. Think of

¹³ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 56.

¹⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 57.

intensive interviewing in the context of grounded theory as a gently guided conversation with the goal of uncovering the hidden principles that guide phenomena. This is all for the purpose of constructing theory about said phenomena. Intensive interviewing is usually the base of a grounded theorist's interview style with informational and investigative interviewing coming into play as needed for gathering details. The semi-formal interviews that I had already completed before stumbling onto the grounded theory method of qualitative research showed characteristics of all three styles of interviewing mentioned above: informational, investigative, and intensive.¹⁵

Charmaz's style of grounded theory encourages the researcher to begin interacting with the data for the purpose of analysis from the beginning. The goal is theory. Charmaz writes, "But pursuing theory can place you on tricky ground, if you do not also heed cues about what your research participant wants to say. Thus, you have two overall objectives for interviewing: attending to your research participants and constructing theoretical analysis."¹⁶ She encourages the researcher to make notes during the interview when analytic ideas are forming. These notes could be the key to the theoretical plausibility of the analysis. Accuracy is important, but a grounded theorist is not as concerned with the accuracy of the accounts of each interview as they are with the principles that led the interviewee to experience the studied phenomena. A grounded theorist is most concerned with the theoretical plausibility, direction, centrality, and adequacy of the analysis birthed from the interview.¹⁷

¹⁵ The questions I sent to the interviewees in advance of each interview and used as a guide during the interview are included in the appendices.

¹⁶ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 87.

¹⁷ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 87.

After an interview is completed, it is transcribed and coded. There are two phases of coding. Initial coding, the first phase, is a line-by-line coding that forces the researcher to stick close to what was said by the interviewee. Charmaz defines coding as “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data.”¹⁸ She goes on to say, “Codes explicate how people enact or respond to events, what meanings they hold, and how and why these actions and meanings evolved.”¹⁹ These codes allow you to sort the data and begin analytic interaction with the data, essentially conceptualizing what is happening in the data. The initial coding phase is important because it builds analysis from a grounded understanding of the data which produces a stronger result, potentially to the allowance of constructing theory.

Charmaz encourages analysis of data throughout the process using constant comparative methods. Constantly comparing the statements of interviewees with their own statements and with the statements of others later in the interview process will help to strengthen analysis. Understanding these comparative methods helped me to learn an important lesson for conducting this type of qualitative research. In the use of Grounded Theory, one should not dismiss their own ideas even if they differ from some statements made by the interviewees. Charmaz states:

These ideas may rest on covert meanings and actions that have not entirely surfaced yet. Such intuitions form another set of ideas to check. Our task is to make analytic sense of the material, which may challenge taken-for-granted understandings, and grounded theory strategies lead you to remain engaged in comparative analysis to test your ideas.²⁰

¹⁸ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 111.

¹⁹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 113.

²⁰ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 132.

As one is interviewing or coding, they may have an analytic idea. Charmaz encourages the researcher to stop when appropriate and make a memo in order to preserve the analysis. It is from these analytic findings that new understandings of the phenomena could be birthed. It is these analytic findings that create the structure for the final analysis found in the researcher's final paper.

As I began the initial coding phase, I was a bit overwhelmed at the amount of data that needed to be coded. Eighteen interviews transcribed with each interview being between 400 and 700 lines of code is a daunting task. After trudging through the coding of the first few interviews, I could already see the value of the grounded theory approach to qualitative analysis. Patterns began to arise in the codes that were highlighting potential principles and processes. These could be the principles and processes that span across each of the interviewee's stories creating the basis for a grounded theory, or they could be outlying patterns that only these few pastors (the first few that I had coded) had experienced. Either way, the data was beginning to reveal deeper meaning, even at the initial phase of initial coding. This process was creating an excitement for uncovering what was next.

Focused coding follows once the initial coding phase is completed. Where initial coding is a line by line type of coding that closely sticks to the data, focused coding is a selective phase that codes the initial codes for the purpose of organizing large amounts of data to help with the analytic process.²¹ Initial coding followed by focused coding keeps the researcher going back to the data over and over. This immersion allows for

²¹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 113.

deeper analytic thought and more valuable revelations to be seen throughout the process further focusing future interviews, coding, and memos.

When identifying focused codes, asking the following questions was helpful:

- What do I find when you compare my initial codes with the data?
- In which ways might my initial codes reveal patterns?
- Which of these codes best account for the data?
- Have I raised these codes to focused codes?
- What do my comparisons between codes indicate?
- Do my focused codes reveal gaps in the data?²²

These questions are provided by Charmaz and intended to help differentiate the data which is simply extraneous data from the data useful for the generation of a plausible theory.

As I walked through the interviews writing focused codes for the initial codes that had already been written, the previously visible patterns in the process of each local church becoming a globally connected church began to be more defined. These patterns began to become clearly distinct categories of actions. These categories of actions seemed to hold principles that were repeatable. The focused coding process forced me to keep pouring over the data for more analytic insight. My hope was that this insight would strengthen the final analysis so that the product of this project could help my local church and other local churches in their pursuit of fulfilling their part of the Great Commission.

²² Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 140.

The next phase of the Grounded Theory process is memo-writing. Memo-writing technically is something that should be done beginning with the first interview as analytic ideas begin to form. Memos are intended to help you analyze your data by being a place where comparisons and connections are jotted down, questions are answered, and new directions are thought up to pursue. Charmaz states, "Writing successive memos throughout the research process keeps you involved in the analysis and helps you to increase the level of abstraction of your ideas."²³ Memo-writing helps for a smooth jump between the gathering and organizing of data to the writing of the final analysis of that data in paper form.

I waited to start the bulk of my official memo-writing process after the interviews, coding, and focused codes were complete. This could have hindered the later interviews from being more concentrated down towards the analytical categories I would have been creating from earlier memos. Nevertheless, I chose to consistently follow the semi-formal interview questions found in the appendix while still allowing the research participant to steer the direction of the interview towards that which they thought important for being a globally connected church. Waiting until the coding and focused codes were complete still allowed me to use the memos to group the material into theoretical categories making the memo writing phase a major part of the preparation for the final paper.

Memo-writing within the context of grounded theory helps the researcher to engage with the research for the purpose of analyzing and discovering emerging

²³ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 162.

theoretical categories that could become theory. Charmaz describes how to write grounded theory memos saying:

Assess which codes best represent what you see happening in the data. In a memo, raise them to conceptual categories for your developing analytic framework—give them conceptual definition and analytical treatment in narrative form in your memo. Categories explicate ideas, events, or processes in your data. A category may subsume common themes and patterns in several codes. Make your categories as conceptual as possible—with abstract power, general reach, analytic direction, and precise wording.²⁴

Conceptual categories began to emerge in the initial and focused coding process. The initial coding phase pulled these categories from the data. The focused coding phase solidified the categories as important. The memo-writing phase raised these conceptual categories to theoretical categories that were sure to inform my final theory.

I began writing memos by going through the transcribed interviews successively and focusing on the focused coding. Starting with the focused codes gave me the chance to see the already developed similarities in the data and analyze which codes were important to the process of each pastor and church becoming globally connected. The focused codes with similarities represented the already developed conceptual categories. The subsequent memo-writing by using those conceptual categories raised their level of importance to theoretical categories. I would find conceptual categories in the focused coding that seemed to be more important because of their repetition, then I would drill down to the initial codes and actual transcription data to better understand the process. This helped me to solidify theoretical categories for the process of a local church becoming a globally connected church. Because of the Grounded Theory

²⁴ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 189.

process, these theoretical categories were adequately grounded in the data and preserved as such through memos written from each pastor's interview.

Initial sampling followed by theoretical sampling is an important part of getting to saturation in Grounded Theory. Initial sampling is the process that gets one started in a direction to begin gathering data. Within the scope of this project, my initial survey and beginning interviews could be considered initial sampling. The survey was gathering initial categories of pastors who led churches that were connected to the global church in similar fashions. As I began to analyze the interviews through initial coding, focused coding, and then memo-writing, the first interviews brought theoretical categories to the surface. Analyzing the successive interviews through memo-writing solidified these categories. As I continued to analyze, my attention focused more narrowly on the theoretical categories that had emerged. The focusing of the categories and subsequent analysis caused the transition from initial sampling to theoretical sampling. Charmaz defines theoretical sampling as seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in one's emerging theory.²⁵ Theoretical sampling is repeated until saturation is reached, and saturation is reached when new categories or properties are no longer emerging from the data.

As I went through writing memos for each interview, it became increasingly clear that each interview was following a similar identifiable pattern. Keep in mind that the interviews were between 12 and 20 pages of single-spaced transcription. The same identifiable pattern was not just repeated between interviews, it was repeated between life transitions and church life transitions multiple times within each interview. By the 7th

²⁵ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 192.

and 8th interview there were no new properties or categories emerging. I felt I had reached saturation. I continued the memo-writing process for the 9th and 10th interview to confirm that saturation was reached. Both interviews confirmed multiple times throughout each interview that the same theoretical categories were emerging as in the previous interviews with no new directions developing that needed study.

I wanted to strengthen my research through gathering one more theoretical sample. To understand the applicability and importance of theoretical sampling, one must further distinguish the Grounded Theory method of qualitative analysis from the more widely understood quantitative research strategies. Charmaz differentiates between theoretical sampling and quantitative methods by saying:

Theoretical sampling pertains only to conceptual and theoretical development of your analysis; it is not about representing a population or increasing the statistical generalizability of your results. Whereas quantitative researchers use their data to make statistical inferences about target populations, grounded theorists aim to fit their emerging theories with their data... Engaging in theoretical sampling can encourage you to raise your theory to a formal, more abstract level that cuts across different substantive areas.²⁶

For this final theoretical sample, I decided to add an interview of a church planter that began planting a church in an unreached area of Pakistan. All of the other interviews that have been used were pastors of churches that have been working with their church for 10 years or more. This case would see a leader who began their work merely a year ago. If my preexisting theoretical categories fit this new theoretical sample, it would give stronger voice to my grounded theory for multiple reasons. The first being that this would show the process I had identified for a local church becoming a globally connected church could potentially be seen in the first year of church planting.

²⁶ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 198, 212.

This may help solidify principles that a pastor could implement from the beginning of starting a ministry, being able to trust that the principles over time would cause his work to be more connected the global body of Christ. Another reason this sample could give stronger voice to my theory is that Pakistan is 5th on the Open Doors most persecuted watchlist.²⁷ Because of the cultural persecution, it would seem harder for a local church to grow more globally connected. Finally, the world was still reeling from a global pandemic. During 2020 and 2021, the Covid-19 virus caused many governments, including Pakistan, to periodically shut down some aspects of society that are important to church life. Whether it be total periodic societal lockdowns, vaccine mandates, or the prevention of gatherings of people, these shutdowns made it more difficult for a church to grow and connect to the global body of Christ. Many church buildings around the world stopped having in-person services and shut their doors never to open them again blaming Covid-19 for their closure. The Gospel has weathered persecution and disease for over 2000 years. The previously identified theoretical categories for a local work becoming a globally connected work are potentially a strategy robust enough to weather a global pandemic in any culture, including one with cultural persecution. This new theoretical sample would hopefully help to show an example of that potential.

This church planter was identified and verified through multiple ministry workers who have ministered in Pakistan many times. The theoretical sample consisted of multiple interviews that took place over video calls and text messages through a communication app called WhatsApp. The goal was to understand the complete story of this church planting effort from its conception until present day, then to analyze the data

²⁷ Open Doors n.d., accessed December 20, 2021, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list>.

to see if the previously identified theoretical categories that had emerged from the interviews of more established churches fit the story of this newly started church movement.

Due to the fact that most of the interviews for this specific church planter were conducted over WhatsApp and not Zoom, they took on a more informal nature than the rest of the interviews that were conducted. Because of this, the text, audio calls, and video chats were in a form that was impossible to transcribe in the same way as the previous interviews. Therefore, memo-writing was the primary form of identifying if this theoretical sample fit the theoretical categories that had been previously identified in the research. As seen in Chapter 1, after the conclusion of my research, I was able to personally travel to Pakistan and verify the work of this church planter. It was an exciting experience that further solidified my proposed grounded theory. The results of this theoretical sample will be shown in the appendices.

As previously implied, the goal of grounded theory is constructing an actual theory that is grounded in the data. Charmaz defines theory by stating, "A theory states relationships between abstract concepts and may aim for either explanation or understanding."²⁸ The goal of this research project was to identify concepts and principles that each pastor exemplified in their journey towards global connectedness, then identify how these concepts and principles were similar or different. I had to do this while analytically asking which concepts shined through each interview, showing to be vital to the overall process of a local church becoming a globally connected church.

²⁸ Robert Tornberg and Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," In *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, by Stephen Lapan, Marylynn Quartaroli, & Frances Reimer, 41 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 2012.

There are two main avenues that one can take in constructing theory from within a grounded theory research project: Positivist Theory and Interpretivist Theory.

According to Charmaz, a researcher who uses positivist theory will:

- Follow the scientific method.
- Assume an external reality.
- Be an unbiased observer.
- Discover abstract generalities.
- Explain empirical phenomena.
- Separate facts and values.
- See truth as provisional.²⁹

A positivist focuses on the facts in the research and keeps the research free from being contaminated by their values. The claim is that their research is uncontaminated by self; therefore, the objectivity of the research is seen as its strength. This type of theory generation differs greatly from the interpretivist approach. According to Charmaz, a researcher who uses interpretivist theory will:

- Emphasize problem-solving.
- Assume a fluid, somewhat indeterminate reality.
- Define multiple perspectives.
- Study people's actions to solve emergent problems.
- Join facts and values.
- See truth as provisional.³⁰

²⁹ Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 229.

³⁰ Charmaz, *Grounded Theory*, 231.

The interpretive approach assumes that the values of the researcher will interact with the data. The approach is more subjective as it acknowledges that the researcher is interpreting the meanings of those participating in the research. Charmaz's own preference is interpretive theory.³¹

There have been many scholarly divisions based on how to affectively do qualitative research. Most of them have to do with the scholar's preference for using a positivist or an interpretivist perspective. This can further be boiled down to an objectivist or constructivist approach to creating theory from qualitative research.

Charmaz says that the objectivist view to grounded theory "assumes an external reality and an unbiased observer who records facts about it."³² This is in sharp contrast to the constructionist view which, as Charmaz states, "theorizes the interpretive work that research participants do but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation. The theory depends on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it."³³ As someone pursuing grounded theory, I have been instructed in a largely quantitative world. When starting the project, I inherently leaned toward quantitative research assumingly because I was taught how to use the scientific method as early as our middle school and high school science classes. Because of this, my leaning was toward the positivist and objectivist approaches when attempting qualitative research.³⁴ After reading the book *Constructing Grounded Theory*, I realized that though I did use some aspects of the positivist and objectivist approach, the interpretivist and

³¹ Charmaz, *Grounded Theory*, 233.

³² Charmaz, *Grounded Theory*, 237.

³³ Charmaz, *Grounded Theory*, 239.

³⁴ A table that more adequately discusses the contrasts between the objectivist and constructionist view towards creating Grounded Theory will be included in the Appendix.

constructionist approach better fit my project. It gave me the ability to investigate the overt processes of a local church becoming a globally connected church and to offer explanatory statements about them that are grounded in the data but admittedly connected to my values and vantage point. As Charmaz states:

Whether we adhere to positivist or interpretive traditions, we do not gain autonomous theory, albeit one amenable to modification. Rather we are part of our constructed theory, and this theory reflects the vantage points inherent in our varied experiences, whether or not we are aware of them.³⁵

Concluding Thoughts

This research project took many twists and turns in an effort to get to the finish line—presenting a deeper understanding of how a local church becomes a globally connected church. The results and implications of this research and resulting theory will be discussed in the next chapter. My hope is that the results of this project will not only encourage local churches in their journey towards being globally connected but will also encourage other researchers to critique and build on this theory. If together we strengthen the Global Church's understanding of the necessity and practice of local churches connecting to the global body of Christ, we will play a part in strengthening the unification of the global body of Christ. We will be another step closer in seeing the answer to Jesus's prayer of the world knowing that the Father sent him.³⁶ We will be another step closer to accomplishing The Great Commission.³⁷

³⁵ Charmaz, *Grounded Theory*, 260.

³⁶ John 17:22-23.

³⁷ Matthew 28:18-20.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES

Introduction

The passion to engage the world, to shape it and finally change it for the better, would seem to be an enduring mark of Christians on the world in which they live. To be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God's restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private.¹

The Great Commission was given to us by Christ. Every Christian has a mandate from Christ himself to do his part in going to all of the world making disciples and teaching them to do everything that Christ commanded the first disciples to do.² If this is the mandate to every single believer, then it is surely the mandate to every group of believers—to every local church. For a local church to be effective at reaching the world for Jesus, it must be connected to the global church. This is God's will. The more that local churches unify under Christ's headship as a part of the global church, the more effective the body of Christ will be at bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.³ This begs the question: How do we connect with the Global Body of Christ? How does a local church become a globally connected church?

The question above is the basis for this research project. In this chapter, I will explain the outcomes of the research described in Chapter 4. First, I will discuss the proposed research question and how that shifted into a hypothesis, a hypothesis which was then corrected by the detailed analysis of the data obtained by this research

¹ James D. Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Kindle Edition, 4.

² Matthew 28:18-20.

³ I have shown the theological backing for this in Chapter Two of this thesis project.

project. Then I will explain six theoretical categories showing how they emerged from the gathered data and subsequent analysis. These six categories form the basis of my proposed grounded theory for how a local church becomes a globally connected church. Next, I will suggest possible improvements to this study that could strengthen and refine the proposed theory. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the proposed theory.

An Emergent Grounded Theory

In the proposal for this research project, I asked two questions: 1.) What are the characteristics of a globally connected church? 2.) How can a local church become a globally connected church? The first question deals with who a globally connected church is. The second, which is the base question for the start of this research project, asks what a church must do to become globally connected. I then went on to assume the characteristics of a globally connected church based on previous study and experience. I said a globally connected church is a church that has a globally connected leader and is a discipling church, a relational church, a sowing church, and a going church. I then used those assumptions to identify globally connected churches and interviewed the leaders of these churches. At the time of writing my proposal, my hope was to find a list of principles that any church can put into practice in order to become more globally connected.

As I reflected on the raw data of this research project in combination with Chapter 2, the theology of why it is necessary for a local church to be connected to the Global Church, I realized that the way I proposed the research question had a flaw. The flaw is based in an assumption that function creates structure. This is a common

assumption because of the culture of the world in which we live. Many people judge another by their past actions, thinking and saying, “You are what you have done, and you are not what you have not done.” Within the context of Biblical Christianity, this is simply not true. The Bible clearly says in 2 Corinthians 5:16-17, “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation: The old is gone, the new is here!” This challenges our perception of reality. Christians are commanded to regard no one from a worldly point of view, not even ourselves. We are not the sum of our past actions. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Therefore, our structure has been determined by Him. Romans 12:2 continues with the same challenge to shift our perception, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” This Scripture in combination with the previous carries the implication that our understanding of what God wills us to do in a given situation will become clearer as our mind shifts to believe we are the new creation He created us to be. As we understand who He says that we are as His new creation, our doing will come from that understanding. To say it in another way, as we understand our new structure, the way we function will be transformed. We also know that as the body without the spirit is dead, faith without works is dead.⁴ Therefore, God has given each person a designed structure, but if the person does not use its designed structure, his life is like a lifeless corpse. If this is true for an individual in the Body of Christ, then it is true for a group of individuals in the Body of Christ—a local church. A

⁴ James 2:26.

local church is a member in the body of Christ; therefore, a local church is not the sum of its past actions but is who Christ declares it to be. It must understand its created structure and must act out of that understanding.

Since the nature and characteristics of God can be clearly seen in his creation, we need not look any further than biology to see the fact that structure determines function echoed throughout the natural world. Even a college textbook titled “Human Biology” states, “One of the overarching themes of biology is that **structure determines function**; how something is arranged allows it to perform a specific job. We see this at all levels in the hierarchy of biological organization from atoms up to the biosphere.”⁵

I proposed the research question as if being a globally connected church is the goal, and there are things one could do in order to become globally connected. The flaw here is this: if a local church is a part of the Body of Christ, it is connected to the Body of Christ. That is a fact based on its God-created structure. There is nothing it needs to do in order to become, it is by way of the Holy Spirit a new creation and already a part of the whole of the Body of Christ. To the degree that a local church understands and believes who it is, it will do what God created it to do.

The assumed characteristics of a globally connected church that I listed were: a globally connected leader, a relational church, a discipling church, a sowing church, and a going church. These characteristics became my hypothesized structure of a globally connected church. If I correctly identified the structure of a globally connected church, then the function of the church should happen as a church understands its created

⁵ Nancy Barrickman, Kathy Bell, and Chris Cowan, *Human Biology*, Salt Lake Community College, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://slcc.pressbooks.pub/humanbiology/chapter/chapter-12-organ-systems-of-the-human-body>.

structure. The list of characteristics should not happen in the churches because of their actions to become those things; they should happen to the extent that the leadership and the church believed that this is who God created them to be. When structure is believed, it is only a matter of time before the function is carried out. For example, to the extent that a person or a body of believers believes they are in Christ and that Christ is relational, then they will be relational too. To the extent that a body of believers believes that they are in Christ and Christ is one who gives, they will give as well. The structure and resulting function of Christ is the structure and resulting function of his body. This is applicable for each hypothesized characteristic of a globally connected church: relational, discipling, sowing, and going.

This understanding of doing coming from what one is created to be is reflected in Paul's writing to the Ephesians. In the first 3 chapters, Paul is telling the Ephesian church who it already is declared to be in Christ. Paul says the church in Ephesus is faithful in Christ, blessed with every spiritual blessing, chosen, adopted, marked, seated with Christ in heavenly realms, and fellow citizens with God's people. Then in Chapters 4 and 5 Paul tells them how that understanding of their being should work out in their actions. For example, in Ephesians 4:25 Paul says, "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor for we are all members of one body." Speaking truthfully to one's neighbor is the result of being seated with Christ and a citizen with God's holy people. Paul reminds the Ephesian church of what it should be doing. Repentance is necessary for the areas in which the church in Ephesus is not doing the things that are a result of who Christ has declared them to be. In the same way, Christ has declared who His Global Church is. Therefore, there are certain

functions each local church should be carrying out because of its created structure in connection to the Global Body of Christ. When a local church recognizes it is not carrying out one of the functions for which its structure is designed, it should repent and take steps toward carrying out all the intended functions of its structure.

The following sections move us from hypothesis to grounded theory. Each section will state a characteristic of a globally connected church and show how that characteristic emerged from the research. I have found the characteristics not only took on a distinct order that was different from what I hypothesized, but there was an additional characteristic added. It is recognized that there are situations where a church will use a certain principle out of the order listed by this grounded theory. It is also possible for some or all of the principles to be done in harmony. There is more research to be done; however, according to the data gathered for this project, the characteristics in the described order are the process for a local church to become a globally connected church.

A globally connected church is a church with a globally connected leader who has ongoing encounters with God that lead to an ever-deepening surrender. Through surrender to the leading of God the leader is shown to be a going, sowing, relational, and discipling person. Over time, the people of the church have more and more encounters with God followed by surrender. That process leads them to going outside of themselves, sowing outside of themselves, being relational with those outside of their circle, and discipling those with whom they have new relationships. As this happens to more and more people, the church as a unit begins to exemplify the characteristics of its individual members. The church is shown to be a church that surrenders to the leading

of God through ongoing encounters with Him, encounters that lead the church to go, to sow, to be relational, and to disciple others. The church is the encounter with God that leads the world around it to surrender.

A Globally Connected Leader

God's method of disseminating information in a way that trains people to live out who He intended them to be is discipleship. The Father started with one, Jesus, then multiplied out through Jesus to twelve, then to 70, then to 120, and over time to many cultures and nations all around the world. In speaking about Jesus's discipleship, world renown evangelist and professor, Dr. Robert E. Coleman states, "He never asked anyone to do something which he was unwilling to do. So as the disciples went out, the Master likewise 'departed thence to teach and preach in their cities.'"⁶ When God wants to transform a group of people into who He has called them to be, he transforms a person and then sends them to that people. That person then exemplifies the transformation, and it disseminates throughout the people. This method is no less true for helping a local church to become more globally connected. A church grows to be more globally connected when it has a leader who is growing to be more globally connected.

The globally connected churches I interviewed all had globally connected leaders as shown on the results of the GCQ. The following shows the characteristics that each leader I interviewed exemplified, characteristics which resulted in them continuously growing more and more globally connected.

⁶ Robert E. Coleman, *The Masterplan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 85.

Encounters With God Followed by Surrender

When interviewing each senior pastor, I first asked them how they came to know Jesus and studied their story from being born again to beginning ministry at their current church. This was a significant portion of each interview usually taking up about half of the time allotted. I was ok with spending this much time getting to know the pastor's heart because as previously stated and widely said, the heart of the leader determines the heart of the organization.

Each senior pastor had multiple supernatural encounters with God. Each encounter required deepening levels of surrender that led them eventually to leading their current church and leading that church to become more globally connected than it was when they took the position. The following is a quote from one of my interviews and is an example of the man having an early encounter with God on his journey to becoming a senior pastor:⁷

...but two weeks into the trip, I have an encounter with God and the Lord messes me up. And I had this moment where I just realized I was called to do something big with my life. And it starts with surrender to Jesus, and I give my life back to Christ at that point and felt called to the ministry at the same moment. I felt the Lord tell me a couple of things, that if I give my life to him, then he'll make my life count for something like my life will be significant and I'll work in that part of the world for the rest of my life.

This one moment began a journey that led to this specific pastor planting a church 13 years later. Through that church this pastor has done significant work in that same region of the world where he had this encounter with God.

⁷ Each quote of an interview with a pastor will be anonymous because of the anonymity assured to each pastor before beginning the interview.

The words “encounter with God” and “surrender” were heard over and over in each pastor’s journey which caused the phrase “encounter with God” to become an initial code and then a focused code which produced multiple memos. This led to “encounter with God” becoming a theoretical category that emerged from the data. Here is another example of an encounter with God from a pastor that led to deepening surrender on his journey to starting and leading a globally connected church:

Later on when I went for my Bible College in New Zealand, I did not have any plan of shifting or moving from my hometown to the city I am in now. But the Lord spoke to me when I was at Bible college and said, ‘I am sending you to this city. There is something big I want to work with you and through you there.’ It was not easy for me to say yes because of the resources. I didn’t have anything. I had nothing; totally nothing you see. As you remember, we don’t take salaries here in Africa. But anyway, I just lifted up my hands and I said, ‘Lord, let your will be done. If you have trusted me for this, then when I go back to Africa, I am willing. So when I finished my studies, (I went back to Africa), and we launched into this city. I came without anything, without a bicycle, without a motorbike, without a car, without money, but by faith. This is a big town where we needed money. But I said, ‘Lord, it is you whom I trust. So then I started evangelism, and I rented a bar and planted a church there.⁸

In this quote we see an encounter with God, “the Lord spoke to me and said...”, followed by surrender, “Lord let your will be done.” Pastor 3 did not surrender with just words but followed by doing what the Lord told him to do. This was an encounter with God followed by surrender.

The repetitiveness of the code, Encounter With God, led to many memos. The following is an example of one of my memos on the subject:

Encounters with God - This is a consistent theme in each pastor's life. Each pastor had a supernatural encounter with God that initiated their relationship with

⁸ For the sake of identifying which pastor is which when quoting while still maintaining their anonymity, I assigned numbers to them and will use those numbers to reference who I am quoting. This quote is from Pastor 3. Pastor 3 is leading a church that reaches many nations. He now leads a network of hundreds of pastors throughout central and eastern Africa.

Him, then their ministry, and some aspects of their ministry. Each encounter required a response. It was God's initiation. The response showed whether or not the person was willing to follow. In Hebrews 11:6 we see that faith exemplifies itself by a willingness to believe God's direction is more beneficial than the path one is currently on.⁹ The encounters with God followed by positive responses of obedience to God's leading set each pastor on a path towards His will for their lives. It's as if their encounters with God combined with their positive responses of obedience, enabled them to become the catalyst of multiple encounters with God for other people.

I am sure that each pastor had many more encounters with God that led them in their daily life, but for the purpose of this research, the encounters with God that are highlighted were leading them specifically to go outside of themselves in order to help others encounter God too.

Going¹⁰

There was an identifiable process for each senior pastor's journey from being born again to becoming a globally connected leader of a globally connected church. I acknowledge there could be exceptions to the rule, and there usually are, but as for this data, the process of becoming globally connected is shown to have an identifiable order. Each senior pastor described multiple encounters with God. The encounters with God would lead to surrender. That surrender eventually led to the pastor taking a step

⁹ Hebrews 11:6 – And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

¹⁰ Collins English Dictionary defines going as to move or proceed, especially to or from something. I use the term going to reflect the going outside of one's self, one's current normal, or one's current realm of influence for the sake of obedience to God.

to impact people outside of themselves. For some it led to packing up their family and moving across a great distance. For others it meant moving back home to start a church. Still for others, it meant staying where they were but beginning to minister the Gospel to others. For all of them it meant a denying of self in order to go outside of their current comfort for the sake of another.

There are many examples of “going” in each pastor’s story. Here are a few:

I prayed the sinner’s prayer, was 20 years old. God on my knees, Thursday night, July 2nd, 1981. It was my parents living room floor at 11:25 p.m. I just remember going “all in” in my life for Christ. And I woke up the next morning. My whole life had changed. Yeah. So, I then started to go into this bible study that summer which was put on by Youth for Christ Campus Life, which I grew up attending in high school but wasn’t a Christian yet. Yeah, but now I was a Christian and I went like on a summer trip to Wyoming where there was a summer camp out there and had a lot of great times. But there was Bible teaching morning and night and that grew my faith. And so I went back to college my senior year at Temple University in Philadelphia. I got involved in Campus Crusade for Christ. Never hear of it when I was a student. Yeah, but now that my eyes were open, somebody invited me in. That’s when I began to get trained in evangelism. And then I started a ministry that senior year with the freshman football team. Yeah, and then after I graduated, I went on staff with a local Christian group, and I did four years of campus ministry and then I went to seminary.¹¹

This man’s whole perspective changed when he had an encounter with Jesus followed by surrender. He started to go to a Bible study—surrendering his time. His encounter with God was not just a moment with no continuation. It was a moment that led to further surrender. That surrender caused him to go, first to a bible study, then to a camp, then to people, to minister to them with what he had learned. When a Christian tastes and sees that God is good, God commissions them to go and tell.

¹¹ Pastor 5.

The following quote is from a pastor who led one of the most globally connected churches out of all of the pastors I interviewed. In his process of coming to know Jesus, the principle of going was demonstrated to him.

We tried a couple of churches, went to a Presbyterian church, a small one. Pastor asked me if he could visit me. I said yes. And he came and I fired questions (at him) for three hours. My wife just sat there. I think she was watching the dialog between him and me. And at the end, I got on my knees and accepted Jesus in my heart. And my wife followed me. And that's how the whole thing started.¹²

The Presbyterian pastor went outside of himself to Pastor 6's home and sowed the Gospel into his heart. This led to a lifetime of Pastor 6 going to others. Here is an excerpt from his story that took place a few years after the previous quote:

And so it came to the point where one day I quit my job and we went and planted a church in that community. And then within a year, we planted two more churches and two other communities along with the one. I'm pastoring three churches at the same time in three different communities 250 miles apart, and I'm driving there every week. So that's how I got started. And so I started planting churches and planting Christian schools because we would plant a church and plant a Christian school there as well.¹³

Pastor 6 demonstrates a willingness to give up the comfort of what is normally expected to follow God's commission to go. In my experience, a North American pastor usually does not faithfully pastor 3 different churches in 3 different communities that are 250 miles apart. This Canadian pastor did. It seems that God's commission to go can often challenge our mental boxes of what is appropriate. These men showed lives that demonstrated the heart of Isaiah in Isaiah 6:8-9, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord

¹² Pastor 6.

¹³ Pastor 6.

saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ He said, ‘God and tell this people...’”¹⁴

As mentioned in Chapter 4 of this paper, the Globally Connected Questionnaire, GCQ, was given to pastors for the purpose of filtering through which churches were globally connected. Those pastors who led globally connected churches were sought after for the semi-formal interview. In the GCQ, I also asked questions about the pastor’s personal practices that had no bearing on the church’s global connectedness. Each completed GCQ not only showed the church’s globally connectedness but also had questions answered that showed that the pastor was a globally connected leader. All of the churches that demonstrated they were a going church also had pastors that demonstrated they were going pastors.¹⁵

The following is a memo written about Pastor 4 that further demonstrates the principle of going:

Going and Sowing: Pastor 4's life is a life of going and sowing. In New Orleans he started learning to go out into the streets and sow into the lives of those around him. At *Christ For the Nations Institute*¹⁶ he was around people from multiple places throughout the world. Pastor 4 learned to have deep encounters with God which led to further surrender and a willingness to go and sow, no matter the people and no matter the culture. He surrendered to the call to go to

¹⁴ Isaiah 6:8-9.

¹⁵ How many mission trips do you, as the senior pastor, go on per year? – mission trip = a trip to another culture for the purpose of ministry. Every pastor who went through the semi-formal interview process and had took the survey, answered that they took at least 1 or more mission trips per year.

¹⁶ Christ For The Nations Institute offers extensive training in many areas of ministry. We believe that a Christian must possess a foundation cemented in Scriptural truths, a personal mission to see the lost saved and empowered as well as a desire to worship God in all areas of life. Whether you are called to lead God’s people into worship, serve on the mission field or preach to the masses, CFNI provides practical training that will remain with you for the duration of your life and ministry. www.cfni.org.

Belize and continue sowing his time, talents and treasure into those to whom God has sent him. This was a time to learn and practice intentional relationship building and discipleship. God then sent him to the church where he grew up, the church where his father was the pastor. Pastor 4 continued to faithfully go and sow, build relationships and disciple by taking the church van and picking up people for his youth ministry and for the church services. Going and sowing became the norm of Pastor 4 which meant he was probably going to lead the church to continue to go and sow.

A globally connected leader is a leader who is willing to go outside of themselves. Without the willingness to do so, there will be very little opportunity to become connected to new people. It would seem that an encounter with God followed by surrender leads to going—going with a God-given purpose. A globally connected leader does not go empty handed but goes and sows what he has into those to whom he is sent.

Sowing¹⁷

“God is a giver. For God so loved the world that He gave, so giving is the heart and giving is loving. If God is a giver, then we learn from him.”¹⁸

In The Great Commission, Jesus told his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. We clearly see the charge to go, and we clearly see the global call, but what do

¹⁷ Sow is defined by Collins English Dictionary as to scatter seed over land, earth, etc., for growth; plant. For this research, I chose to use the term “sowing” because of its breadth. These pastors and churches are scattering their time, talent, and treasure as seed for the Kingdom of Heaven into other people. When I use the term sowing, I am saying the giving of any aspect of yourself or of what is precious to you for the purpose of loving someone else.

¹⁸ This is a quote from pastor 3.

you do after you go? How do you make disciples of all nations? As I poured over the Globally Connected Questionnaire (GCQ) results and the interviews with the pastors who had led their churches to be more and more globally connected, the next part of the process became clear. Going is usually followed by sowing.

The GCQ confirmed that each pastor who was leading a globally connected church was also a consistent sower. Each pastor gave at least 10% of their income to the Church, and most of them gave over and above the tithe. Their growing to be more and more globally connected usually was not merely about them being obedient in their conviction to tithe to their local church, that was the base. Their growing more globally connected was directly related to their process of sowing into those to whom God told them to go and minister.

In the following quote, Pastor 1 demonstrates the principles of going and sowing:

There were a couple of kids the in the library before school having a Bible study. I noticed that and joined them. They invited me to their church. So I went one Sunday. Then I told the pastor that I am at the school and can reach the kids. I got the Bible study group and shared the word that I would be at the church on a Thursday night. The church stopped it. I tried again at the elementary school. They told me no. Then a principal at the early child center offered me her school building and her keys to the facility. He let me take a school bus to the 4 neighborhoods of Wisner and picked them up and took them to that school every Thursday night. I would stop in projects and neighborhoods until the bus was full—sometimes about 60 kids, jr. high and high school. I sometimes pulled the bus over and broke up a fight. It was interesting. I would then preach the Gospel. Nobody helped me. They said they would. I was supposed to have people helping with music and chairs. I ended up being the one to sing the music and set up the chairs. Sometimes, when doing ministry, you have to have grit. I made a vow to God to do it for a year every Thursday night. My son was born on a Thursday afternoon. I kissed my wife and my son, then went and fulfilled my vow to God.¹⁹

¹⁹ Pastor 1.

Every pastor interviewed told stories that resemble the principles found in the above quote. There was a willingness to go, then a willingness to sow into the ones to which the pastor was sent. Pastor 1 was a white man picking up kids in majority black neighborhoods. He was going outside of his culture. Pastor 1 was sowing his life into those kids by giving them the best of his time and his talent. Pastor 1 dealt with the barriers and blocks by continuing to go and sow even when there seemed to be closed doors—the church and elementary school saying that he couldn't meet there. Pastor 1 was faithful to fulfill his commitment to sow into those kids even when there was opportunity for a valid excuse to not continue – the birth of his son.

After being interviewed, Pastor 1 realized that his church had recently begun reaping the fruit of the seeds he sowed in that early childhood center over 20 years before. A man not formally affiliated with Pastor 1 planted a church in that early childhood center. That church began tithing to Pastor 1's church because the pastor was led to do so through an encounter with God then surrendered to God's leading through action. Pastor 1's going and sowing supernaturally led to greater influence in the Kingdom and greater connection with the Body of Christ.

The following is a memo written while processing Pastor 3's story. The principle of sowing was beginning to clearly emerge from the data as exemplified in both the lives of the globally connected leaders and the actions of the globally connected churches.

What causes someone to want to Go and Sow? Pastor 3 said it was a passion for the lost, but where does that come from? The Bible says, "We love because He first loved us." Therefore, as we see His Love for us, we can't help but to Love Him and to Love others better. We will want to help others know the

One who Loves us and them better than we ever could. Therefore, when we have an encounter with God, we are having an encounter with Love. This is why an encounter with God comes before going to sow God's Love into others!

Sowing is Loving. Sowing is finding a need and meeting it. People who refuse to sow, are refusing to love the people God is leading them to sow into. A disciple of Christ must love His body! To love His body is to sow into His body. What one sows into they are passionate about. Sowing is a major part of discipleship.

Prayer is a part of sowing. Prayer is sowing faith into what you are praying for. Prayer connects your heart with that very thing. Those who consistently pray for something are more likely to be involved in the fruit of that thing because they have sown their prayers into it, and because their heart is in it! You sow where you want to go. As shown in the pastor's stories, the fruit of what you sow usually begins with relationship.

The pastors demonstrated through story that sowing is a key principle in connecting with others. The pastors sowed their time, their talent, and their treasure into others. Another part of the sowing principle that emerged was receiving what others sow into you. Receiving is an important part of the sowing principle. Without receiving, the relationship is not as strong as it could be. Receiving from the ones you are sowing into demonstrates humility. Receiving from others can expose one to aspects of Jesus previously out of reach.

Pastor one clearly demonstrates the benefits of sowing and receiving in the following conversation:

Interviewer: I see someone who God has connected relationally around the world, and I see how that has grown. I also see you sowing into them. What is some of the stuff that you've learned from these guys in India, Africa, and around the world? Is it just you sowing into them or are they sowing into you too?

Pastor 1: Well, you know, they sowed into us the Kingdom experiences that God wanted us to know through their ministry. So in India, I got to see a mass crusade of forty thousand people and learn from a very wise anointed apostolic church planter how it all works. So we learned from him how he trains and disciplines (people) to plant churches. And then we learned from our Uganda connection how he trains disciples and ministers to village pastors and takes care of orphans. And then we learned from our Sri Lankan connection how to minister deliverance and council folks who have deep rooted problems that (they) need extra help getting past. So from all of these relationships, you know, we've learned greatly... so much. And then they open the door for us to give the gifts that we have. Ours is simply a deeper revelation of New Covenant Grace. Theirs involves a wide aspect of all of the Kingdom—planting churches and raising disciples and different things.

Going and sowing seem to result in relationships. The willingness followed by the obedience to go and sow unlocks the door to an expanded network of relational influence, a relational influence that is compounded by the willingness to receive from the very relationships one sows into. This is why a globally connected leader is one who experiences encounters with God followed by surrender. Surrender leads to going and sowing. Going and sowing lead to building relationships.

Relational

“People are more important than polish.”²⁰

We are commanded both to love one another as Jesus has loved us, and to have the same mindset in our relationships as that of Christ Jesus.²¹ Thinking about each other and loving each other in the same way that Jesus did develops what two experts

²⁰ Pastor 9.

²¹ John 13:34; Philippians 2:5.

in the study of global leadership, Angel Cabrera and Gregory Unruh, call social capital.²²

They quote management scholars Janine Nahapiet and Sumantra Ghoshal saying,

“Social capital is the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded with,

available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an

individual or social unit.”²³ Cabrera and Unruh go on to say:

Social capital isn’t simply a measure of the quantity of connections but a measure of the quality, diversity, and structure of those connections. Social capital is built around trusting relationships with individuals who in turn can provide access to valuable relationships and resources. When it comes to a global mindset, the social capital that is required must be global in nature: it must include relationships across national and cultural boundaries.²⁴

Within the context of this study, social capital was continuously being developed between the pastors interviewed and: their congregants, a network of relationships outside of their congregations, and new relationships the pastors themselves either pursued or were introduced to through previously existing relationships. Multiple times, a new contact or connection introduced the pastor to a whole new web of relationships that was to impact his own future and the future of the church. The new connections with new webs of relationships happened in multiple ways, but there was one way that was identified as consistent throughout the data: The pastor would surrender to God’s leading through an encounter with God followed by going outside of himself and sowing into those to whom he went. This going and sowing would begin to create social capital

²² Angel Cabrera is president of Thunderbird School of Global Management, which is widely recognized as the number one school in the international business field. Gregory Unruh is a professor of global business at the school and director of the school’s Lincoln Center for Ethics in Global Management.

²³ Ghoshal, Sumantra and Janine Nahapiet, “Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage,” *Academy of Management Review* 23, no. 2 (1998): 242-266, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259373>.

²⁴ Angel Cabrera and Gregory Unruh, *Being Global: How to Think, Act, and Lead in a Transformed World* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2012).

– mutually trusting and mutually beneficial relationships through which the Body of Christ could be strengthened.

The results of the GCQ confirmed that each globally connected pastor who was interviewed was not only a going and a sowing pastor but was a relational pastor as well. Each pastor had greater than 5 meaningful friendships with pastors of other churches. Each pastor had at least one friendship with a pastor of a church from another nation. This friendship was defined as a two-way relationship where the pastor both gave into the relationship and received from the relationship in some way. 80% of the pastors interviewed had 3 or more of these types of relationships with pastors from other nations. The results of the relational questions on the GCQ strengthened the subsequent interviews and allowed for more rich interview data than would have been without the foundational data from the GCQ questions.

The humility and authenticity that exuded from each of the pastors interviewed no doubt played a role in their effectiveness in strengthening old and building new relationships. There seemed to be no pretense in any of them. None were trying to prove the strength of their relationships with God or their ability to grow a great globally connected church. It seemed that none of them were putting on a special show, and I got the feeling that this was true for them not just in front of me, but in front of most if not all of the people to whom they were sent. Because people were more important than their persona, the relationships were allowed to go beyond the superficial level to the level where true connections can be formed. Pastor 9 demonstrates this in the following quote:

But another thing was just their culture. I'd be walking through the bush and maybe locally to the mission station in the school. And because I was white and

people knew who I was they would start talking to me. We'd start walking through the bush. I'd come to their village and then they'd say, 'Oh, come and have dinner with us. And in that culture, coming in, having dinner would be what they are eating. It was no special thing, and I carried that now through the decades of my life. Now what goes on culturally is, you know, I look around if you are coming for coffee and I think, 'but my house is a mess, I need to polish it first'. And I've learned some kind of phrases that I use now, 'People are more important than polish.' So, let's not put on a special show. Come on and have a coffee. You know, the dog's just been sick, but that's ok or whatever.²⁵

It was implicitly understood that God had humbled them many times. They seemed to know at a heart level that their work was the result of God's supernatural Grace. They were willing to confidently say thank you while simultaneously directing all the glory of their accomplishments to Jesus. They knew God was leading them to different relationships. They valued those relationships and pursued them. The pastors were dedicated to saying, "Yes Lord," to God's direction. Pastor 8 gives a good example of this in the following quote:

I think the other key is to let the relationships lead you. I think the biggest issue, Jesus said in John 5 that he only did what he saw... that's 5:19, that he only did what he saw the Father doing. I think the question to ask is, 'Father, what are you doing in missions globally that you want us to be part of? And then, Lord, would you guide us to that? Would you show us, you know, give us the relationships?' And it's been amazing.²⁶

Relationships seemed to be the currency that God used to accomplish His purposes through each pastor. If God wanted to use the pastor to start a new work or strengthen an existing one, it would happen through an existing or new relationship. Pastor 10 gives another of many examples from the data of how going and sowing led to deeper relationships which led to new areas to go and sow.

Interviewer: So talk me through your community connections with other churches and with the Body of Christ.

²⁵ Pastor 9.

²⁶ Pastor 8.

Pastor 10: Let me give you one example. I have a friend who's a pastor in the city now. He lives in one of the roughest neighborhoods in our community. He and his wife serve out of their homes. This past year during the pandemic, he started giving away some food boxes. We have a lot of organizations out here that do food boxes. And he started doing it. They have a smaller church and don't have the budget we have. He's doing a great job of serving his community. And I called him up and said, "Hey, man. What can we do to help?" He said, "Well, you know, we are going to get some more food." And I was like, "Ok! I'll give you a check. Let's get this done." He says, "Well, you know, you guys can come. We can put your name on it." I was like, "I don't want our name on them. I want to put more in your hands because you are already doing it."

So this is a little example of the relationship that we have where we're not going into this as an organization reinventing the wheel. Someone's already meeting the need, we're just going to connect with them. Their capacity was a hundred fifty boxes of food. Our church in one social media post raised ten thousand dollars. Before we were giving food away every week, boxes to different communities... But again, we had the resource; they had the system. They had it all worked out. It was all about how can we put the fingerprint of Jesus on a community right now.

Interviewer: Tell me about your relationship with that pastor. I bet it is stronger than ever.

Pastor 10: Yeah, well, here's what happens. He works for a larger church organization, a church organization who really leads the charge against homelessness in our community. They are the largest Christian organization, all privately funded. And when they saw what we were doing, they said, "We want to feature you guys at our conference because we want to see more of this type of ministry taking place." So there was a global connection. Here we are talking to leaders around the world. But you can say this connection started through these relationships that were only separated by 15 minutes. But now we're talking to leaders around the world, talking to leaders everywhere about them, about what we are doing.

It is significant in the story above that Pastor 10 did not require any credit for sowing into the food ministry of his pastor friend. He rejected the credit. This type of heart is found being taught by Jesus as a principle to live by in the Kingdom of Heaven. In the passage found in Matthew 6:16-18 Jesus is specifically talking about fasting, but teaches the principle that what you do in secret, the Heavenly Father will reward. If you

do something to be seen by people, the praise of people is your only reward. In the same way, when Pastor 10 approached this relationship to sow into it expecting nothing in return, he was openly rewarded with an invitation to speak to his friend's church organization, a new global network of relationships. On a practical level, Pastor 10 created social capital with his unselfish sowing into a relationship that was outside of the influence he had at his church. The new level of social capital opened up avenues for synergistic relationships to help advance the Kingdom of Heaven both locally and globally.

Each pastor interviewed was intentional about building strong relationships with the people to whom they were sent and into whom they consistently sowed their time, talent or treasure. Many of these relationships with people outside of their organizations became relationships which held valuable information or skills to advance the pastors and subsequently their churches forward into deeper global connection and into deeper effectiveness in discipleship.

Discipling

"My part of the plan will be this... I will take every opportunity to serve you. I'll never say no to you because of fear. I'll never say no to you because I've never done it before. The answer is yes; what's the question?"²⁷

According to Collins English Dictionary the verb, disciple, has an obsolete definition—to teach; to train.²⁸ Conllins English Dictionary says that a definition is obsolete when it is either no longer in active use, or that the particular definition of the

²⁷ Pastor 6.

²⁸ *Collins English Dictionary*, "Disciple," Dictionary.com, 2012, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/disciple>.

word is no longer regarded as acceptable or useful even though it is still in existence.²⁹

For the purpose of this thesis, the verb disciple with its meaning, to teach and to train, is not obsolete. It is a timeless command to the body of Christ that defines His Church.

As previously stated, the characteristics of a globally connected leader and of a globally connected church define the leader's and the church's structure. Their functions flow out of their structures. Both, the structure and the function of a globally connected church leader and a globally connected church are defined by and found in Christ. Therefore, if Christ is one who teaches and trains, then a leader of his church is designed to both teach and train. They are found in Christ and Christ is found in them. They are branches abiding in the one vine and therefore have the same DNA. Christ is a "discipler". He demonstrated this in his life on earth, and then commissioned his followers to do the same; therefore, every church leader must be a discipling leader and every church a discipling church.

The Globally Connected Questionnaire confirmed that each pastor interviewed was a discipling pastor. Each pastor regularly met with and discipled 2 or more individuals or small groups. More than half of the pastors interviewed consistently met with greater than 5 individuals or small groups for the purpose of intentional discipleship.

As shown previously in this chapter, the leaders had an encounter with God followed by surrender. The encounter would lead the leaders to then go and generously sow their time, talent, and treasure into others. This would then lead to new

²⁹ Collins English Dictionary, "Disciple," *Dictionary.com*, 2012, accessed March 25, 20222, <https://www.dictionary.com/e/archaic-vs-obsolete/>.

relationships. From these relationships the leader would begin to teach and to train those who were willing to be discipled. The process as defined is:

- 1.) Encounter with God.
- 2.) Surrender.
- 3.) Going.
- 4.) Sowing.
- 5.) Relationship Building.
- 6.) Discipling.

Through this process, the leader becomes the encounter with God for those whom the leader encounters. He then trains them to know God and have their own relational encounters with the Heavenly Father. If the seeds of discipleship were adequately received, then the one being discipled will follow the same process. They will learn to surrender to God's leading, go where God is telling them to go, sow into who God is telling them to sow, build relationships, and begin discipling those people to do the same.

The following quote from pastor 6 is a clear picture of the process above:

It was on a Saturday afternoon, and I read Ephesians 1:4 which says He chose you before the foundation of the world. And so that passage comes off the page at me and it kind of blew my fuses. So I started thinking, 'Well, I didn't choose my parents. I didn't choose the time when I would be born. I didn't choose my race. No. God chose it all. And so if that is true, then God must have a plan for me. Why would he choose me and not have a plan?' So then I thought, 'I've got to live that plan!' So I got on my knees and I prayed a prayer which I've been living off of all these years. And my prayer went like this: I said, 'Lord, I know you have a plan. I don't know what the plan is, but I can't stand the thought of coming to the end of my life and not living out your plan.' So I said, 'I want to make a deal with you. Here's the deal... If you leave that plan in my hands, it'll be all screwed up. So, I am going to believe you. I'm asking you to do whatever you have to do to get me to the finish line, having lived the life that you've told me to live. I believe in you for that. I believe you are going to sovereignly move my life to do

that. My part of the plan will be this... I will take every opportunity to serve you. I'll never say no to you because of fear. I'll never say no to you because I've never done it before. The answer is yes; what's the question? Three days later, I got a phone call from a pastor in my community who I didn't know. He said that they had been talking about me at the local ministerial meeting, which shocked me. He said, "You're a high school teacher and we want you to start a youth ministry based out of the high school because it is a big regional high school. We will support you as pastors in the community. So, I did. I started it. We called it Reach Out, and it was very evangelistic leading people to Jesus there. A lot of other things fell into place and basically, we had a revival for about three years. A lot of people got saved and a lot of kids filled with the Holy Spirit... a lot of outreach. That's really how I got started in ministry.³⁰

Pastor 6 had an encounter with God followed by surrender. The surrender led him to say yes to going outside of his normal to minister to kids in a regional high school. Other churches sowed their finances, he sowed his time and talent into these kids. He built relationships with them. Then there was a three-year process of discipleship and multiplication he called revival. The discipleship looked like consistency in going, in sowing, and being in relationship with these students. This caused a multiplication of kids having encounters with God followed by surrender.

Discipling is the most difficult part of the defined process to becoming globally connected because it requires consistency in every other step of the process. One must continue to have relational encounters with God followed by surrender. One must continue to go outside of themselves to sow into the people with whom they have begun to build relationships. This process in combination with consistency, time and the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit causes the people to whom one is going and in whom one is sowing to reflect the life of Christ that is being sown into them.

Pastor 4 indirectly shows how he was discipled with this interchange:

Interviewer: "Where did you learn to honor your dad like that?"

³⁰ Pastor 6.

Pastor 4: "My dad is easy to honor, um, I wish I could say that it was just, you know, I'm just that special... but my dad is humble. He is not prideful... um, he doesn't need the spotlight. He was a hard worker. He serves. He cleans. He cuts grass. He does not need attention. So it made it easy to honor him, and it still is even today."

This is a very powerful quote from Pastor 4 because of the discussion that came right before it. Pastor 4's dad was the pastor of the church before him. While Pastor 4 was serving his dad, he says about himself, "You know how it is in a small church. I was cutting the grass on Saturday to prepare for Sunday. I was taking out the trash, mopping the floors, then getting up early to go to worship practice and sometimes preach, then that night I would have 25 college students at the house." Pastor 4 was doing the very things he honored his dad for doing his whole life. Pastor 4's dad had discipled him well, and because of this, Pastor 4 now consistently goes outside of himself, sows outside of himself, and builds relationships. These relationships become avenues along which Pastor 4 continues to go and sow. The beautiful thing about Pastor 4, his church, and every pastor that I interviewed, was that their consistent going and sowing and relationship building resulted in disciples of Christ who did the same within their local congregations.

A Globally Connected Church

The Globally Connected Questionnaire not only helped to confirm that each church was globally connected before doing a semi-formal interview with the senior leader, but it also gave something of an understanding of the global connectedness of that local church. 9 of the 10 globally connected pastors who were interviewed indicated that they desired their church to be even more globally connected, and half of the

pastors wanted materials to learn how to become more globally connected. This is interesting because I considered these to be seasoned globally connected leaders of mature globally connected churches. Their hearts to learn and grow implies a deep humility that likely helps with the developing of new relationships. Humility was a trait of each senior pastor interviewed that made it easy to connect with them quickly during the interview process.

All of the globally connected churches were going outside of themselves to help multiple churches and ministries. They were also sowing financially into the ministries to whom they went. Sometimes the sowing would precede the going; other times the going would precede the sowing. Of the 10 pastors interviewed, 8 of the 10 churches were financially sowing into at least 3-5 ministries or churches outside of themselves. The same number of churches had relationships with ministries or churches outside of themselves where they would both give and receive knowledge, volunteers, and/or leaders for the purpose of helping and encouraging each other.

The data gathered from the interviews showed that the particular strategies used to help a church to become more globally connected varied. This variance in strategy could be due to the churches being in different cultural, socio-economical, and historical contexts, or the variance in strategy could be due to some other unknown factor. One church became much more globally connected by starting a conference for its members to meet the missionaries it had been supporting. Other churches became much more globally connected by sending teams to neighboring villages and towns in order to sow seeds of the Gospel. Another church became more globally connected by being intentional to serve the relationships with other pastors in their own city. These

relationships eventually led to larger and larger networks of relationships that the church both sowed into and received from. Still another church was intentional about housing traveling leaders. This led to deepening relationships and opportunities to connect with the ministries of those leaders. The particular strategies used to become globally connected were wide-ranging, but the over-arching principles were not.

The lives and leadership of each globally connected leader interviewed, over the course of time, led to each church becoming a more globally connected church. This process started with the leader continually having encounters with God followed by surrender. These encounters with God could be big Moses-esque burning bush type experiences, and they sometimes were. More often than not, however, these were small but important encounters with God that were the result of a daily personal relationship. The pastors had learned to encounter the leading of God and surrender in the little things. This surrender led to a following of the first words of The Great Commission as found in Matthew 28, “Go...”. The pastors would go outside of themselves and sow their time, talent and treasure into those to whom they went. This generous giving of themselves created relational influence with those to whom they went and sowed. Some of this relational influence resulted in both intentional and non-intentional discipleship. Over time, some people in the church would begin to exhibit similar characteristics in their own lives. They would go outside of themselves for the purpose of sowing the life of Christ that was in them into others. This would lead to more relationships which would lead to more discipleship. As this cycle of encounter with God, surrendering, going, sowing, relationship building, and discipling was continued more and more by individuals in the church, new strategies would surface for that church to be more

effective at going outside of themselves. The churches would go more often, sow more money, and generally be more effective at carrying out the great commission. Global Connectedness did not happen all at once. It was a process of daily living out the principles listed and will continue to be such a process.

The end of the call for each church to grow deeper in connection to the global Body of Christ may be when every tribe, tongue and nation is worshipping around the throne of God. Until then, let us each grow in our relationship with God. As we encounter Him, let us surrender to His leading to go outside of ourselves, sow outside of ourselves, build relationships with those to whom we go and sow, and disciple and be discipled by those new relationships. As we do, both we and those to whom we go, and sow will be in the process of being more connected to the global body of Christ.

Possible Improvements

This study morphed into more of a treatise mostly on the principles of being a globally connected leader and then the identical principles of being a globally connected church. The strategies of what practical things must be done to carry out those principles varied too widely for the scope of this project. More study on how a local church becomes more globally connected is needed. I suggest multiple case studies of the churches in this project or of other mature globally connected churches. These case studies could show the exact steps each church took in order to become more globally connected while detailing the context which necessitated such steps. These case studies would be useful for pastors and churches who are learning how to practically live out the 5 principles of becoming more globally connected. Pastors and churches would be learning from and encouraging one another in what an encounter with God

followed by surrender looks like. They would see examples of going outside of themselves in both big and small ways. They would hear examples of when to sow into new potential relationships as well as hear examples of when not to sow into those same types of relationships. They would gain cultural intelligence just by reading how another pastor or church built relationships with other leaders and ministries outside of themselves. They would also see and learn ways to disciple and learn from those new relationships. They would hear stories of how the new relationships specifically impacted the church and gain ideas of how to receive a similar impact in their church.

I also believe that a more detailed statistical analysis of each globally connected church would be very beneficial. The analysis should identify the percentages of the individuals in the particular congregation that live out the 5 principles of a globally connected church. This could help identify if there is a critical mass of globally connected people necessary before the church as a whole becomes a globally connected church. It could also identify what that critical mass is, which would help with a better understanding of where a church is in the process to becoming globally connected.

APPENDIX A

GLOBALLY CONNECTED QUESTIONNAIRE (GCQ)

GCQ – A Short Questionnaire for the Senior Pastor

This confidential and anonymous questionnaire is designed to explore the connectedness of local churches to the Global Church. The information you provide will be a helpful diagnostic used to understand the current connectedness of today's local churches to the Global Body of Christ and used to help local churches understand how to become more globally connected.

This study is being conducted through Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary by Pastor David John Philips for the completion of his doctoral research. Please be assured that all of your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with the responses of other participants in this study. The answers that you give will never be linked with your name or church. By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

Thank you for participating.

1.) Are you the Senior Pastor of your church? *

- Yes
- No

2.) I believe every local church should be a globally connected church. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

3.) I think my church is a globally connected church. (1 = not globally connected, 10 = very globally connected)*

- 0
- 1
- 2

- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

4.) How many individuals and/or small groups within your church are you personally meeting with at least monthly for the purpose of intentional discipleship? *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

5.) What percentage of your family's income is given as tithes and offerings? *

- 0%
- 1-5%
- 5-9%
- 10%
- 11-15%
- >15%

6.) How many meaningful friendships do you have with pastors of other churches? *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

7.) What percentage of your church's budget is given to other ministries and churches? (This includes church plants, denominational boards, and oversight ministries. This does not include multisite campuses nor outreach ministries run by your church) *

- 0%
- 1-5%

- 6-9%
- 10%
- 11-15%
- >15%

8.) How many mission trips do you, as the senior pastor, go on per year? (Mission trip = a trip to another culture for the purpose of ministry.) *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

9.) How many mission trips does your church go on per year? (Mission trip = a trip to another culture for the purpose of ministry. This can include the trip that you as senior pastor goes on if at least 1 non-family member from the church joins you.) *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

10.) How many friendships do you personally have with pastors and leaders from other nations? (Friendship here implies a two-way relationship; you give out and receive from them in some way. For instance: you financially support a pastor in China, and you personally learn from him and his ministry in ways that informs your ministry) *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

11.) How many other churches and/or other ministries does your church invest in financially each month? (This includes individual churches overseas and church plants. This does not include campuses of a multi-site church, nor does it include a denominational fund) *

- 0
- 1

- 2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- >10

12.) How many other churches is your church relationally invested in? – your church knows the other church and your church gives knowledge, volunteers, and/or leaders for the purpose of helping their church to get better. (This includes domestically and internationally. This does not include campuses of a multi-site church) *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- >10

13.) How many people from other churches or ministries do you bring in to preach at your church each year? *

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4-5
- >5

14.) How many people attend your church? *

- 0-50
- 51-100
- 101-300
- 301-500
- 501-1000
- 1001-3000
- 3001-5000
- 5001-10,000
- >10,000

15.) I would like my church to become a more globally connected church. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree

- Strongly agree
- 16.) I need resources to help me learn to become a more globally connected church.***
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree

Thank you!

If you would be interested in conducting a confidential semi-formal interview to help the Global Church learn how to be more globally connected, please leave your information below. If not, please click submit at the bottom of the page.

Thank you for participating.

Church Name -

Church Location: City and State -

Name -

Email -

Phone -

APPENDIX B
SEMI-FORMAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you come to know Jesus?
2. When did you become the pastor at this church? How?
3. What is your vision for this church? Is it different from when you began?
4. When you pray for your church, what do you consistently pray for?
5. In your own words, describe what a globally connected local church is.
6. Would you say your church is a globally connected church now? Why?
7. Was it a globally connected church before you got here?
8. How has it changed with respect to its global connectedness since you got here?
9. Do you have close friends who are pastors of other churches in your city?
10. When did you start to connect with other churches and pastors of other churches?
11. When did you, personally, start to have a passion for global mission, connecting cross culturally? – how did that take shape?
12. Do you continue to build those relationships cross culturally? How?
13. What is discipleship? – Are you personally discipling others? (Preaching on Sunday's doesn't count...)
14. Do you tithe? Do you give over that? To what?
15. Do you go on mission trips? Are you personally ministering cross-culturally in some way?
16. If you could give me three brief highlights in your ministry here, what would they be?
17. Could you describe some of your discipleship process at this church?
18. What percentage of your budget goes to other churches/ministries?
19. How often does your church go to help other churches/ministries?

20. Do you see a pattern of growth in the global connectedness of your church since you got there? Could you briefly describe how that happened?

21. What question should I have asked?

APPENDIX C

SAGAR AND POOJA

In 2019 I met Sagar and his wife Pooja through some of his family that had a large ministry in the city of Lahore. His family had been verified by a couple of evangelist friends of mine who had traveled to Pakistan to do ministry. After about a year of developing a friendship over Facebook and What's App, he invited me to participate in a ministry he and Pooja felt called to pioneer.

Pooja and Sagar both come from a family of ministers of the Gospel in the state of Punjab, and some are well-known evangelists in the same state. Before they were married, Pooja would have dreams of preaching to Hindu people who worshipped idols and casting out demons. (The name Pooja means “to worship God” in the Hindi language.)

After Sagar and Pooja married, they felt called to the state of Sindh, Pakistan in a specific region where there were many Hindu people. They felt that the name Pooja was a prophetic sign to them that they were to be helping the Hindu people to worship Jesus. They answered the call by beginning to pray for the Hindu people in and around the Sanghar district in Sindh, Pakistan.

About two weeks after beginning to pray, Sagar got a call from a man named Deva and his family. They invited him to come and tell them and the surrounding villagers in the Sanghar district about Jesus. Deva had seen a Facebook video of Sagar preaching and reached out to him. Deva was from the Marwari people group in Sindh, Pakistan, a people group that is mostly Hindu.

Sagar and his wife knew this was an answer to their prayers. Sagar and Pooja then traveled 14 hours by train from their home city, to Sanghar, Sindh. They did a Gospel event in a field near to where Deva lived. They invited people from the surrounding 15 villages. Four hundred people came to hear the Gospel. Over 100 people were born again. Sagar and Pooja then went to the 15 villages where these people were bussed in from. They were visiting and praying and preaching the Gospel. Over the course of three days, 300 people gave their lives to Jesus.

The closest church to the new believers that Sagar knew of was about a three-four-hour drive away. Daniel did not know of any other Christian pastors or leaders near to the new believers to help disciple them. After prayer and some counsel, Sagar asked his translator, Faruk, to move to the villages to disciple them in the ways of Jesus for six months. Faruk quit his job and moved his wife and kids eight hours from his home to the 15 villages for the purpose of discipleship.

The new Christian believers in these 15 villages began having issues with finding clean water. The only clean water in the area they live was from water wells that have hand pumps connected to them. These wells were owned by Hindu people, and the Hindus were not allowing the new Christian believers to have access to the village water.

Sagar began to sow water wells in each of the 15 villages for the new Christians to have access to clean water. The new water wells were called “the waters of Life” because they not only gave the believers clean water, but they also became a place where the new believers shared their faith with their fellow villagers. The Christians freely shared their clean water with whoever needed some. This opened the hearts of

some of their fellow villagers to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and helped the Gospel to multiply.

Sagar and Pooja kept a close relationship with Faruk and the new believers through many discipleship conversations over the phone and through occasionally traveling to the region to encourage and train the new believers and budding leaders. Three months after doing the initial Gospel event, Sagar and Pooja trained Faruk to train the leaders in T4T, a church planting movement curriculum that has worked in various cultures around the world. At this point, there were still 300 believers.

Multiplication began because of the new training. Over the next three months 150 new believers were added. This was mostly from the new believers sharing their testimony, sharing the Gospel, and starting new groups with the other villagers. Now, there were 450 believers in six months total with 15 new leaders trained.

Sagar and Pooja then decided to do another large Gospel event in the region hoping for 2000 people to come. Two thousand did come and over 900 people were born again. This meant that 1350 or more new believers were now in this region in just six months. What had started from one family from one village asking Sagar to come, was now 1350 people from 15 villages that believed in Jesus.

Faruk and his family then moved back home making room for the newly trained leaders to continue to steward the work. The T4T process was still being used as the structure to help move the work forward. Sagar and Pooja would stay in contact with the leaders via WhatsApp. He would also travel to the region to encourage the leaders every couple of months.

During this time, Sagar noticed that many of the new believers were afraid to be bold in their faith because of persecution. Sagar taught them about the Holy Spirit and boldness. As the believers received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, they began to wear crosses around their necks and be unafraid and unashamed to go and sow the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their fellow villagers and to the surrounding villages. More disciples of Christ were being made and more groups were being started.

One year after the initial Gospel event there were 2000 born again believers and 25 male leaders.

The females were still being held back by the men because of the culture. Females were treated more like slaves than sisters in Christ. (The males hadn't learned that all believers, male and female, can be empowered by Holy Spirit.) Sagar went on another trip and corrected the people according to Scripture. It was well received. The men leaders recognized their wives as leaders too and empowered them to go and preach to the women. At this point there were 25 male leaders and 25 female leaders.

From time-to-time, doctrinal issues would come up due to the influence of some other belief system in the area. Sagar would talk to his leaders and friends about it, discuss and pray. Sagar would then train the leaders correctly and they would train the people. One such issue was the doctrine of the Trinity. Sagar became great at breaking down complex ideas into things new Christians can understand.

Fifteen months from when this work started, Sagar and Pooja decided to do another Gospel event. This time they mobilized the leaders to go to the surrounding villages to invite them to hear about Jesus. At this point there were over 2700 believers in over 27 villages and 100 leaders. The leaders went from village to village passing out

flyers to the event and sharing the testimonies of their salvations, healings, deliverances, and all of the miracles God was doing. They invited people from 130 other Marwari villages to come to the Gospel event. If people from every village came, this would be people from 157 Marwari villages hearing the Gospel.

Sagar and Pooja had another people group near the Marwari people that was wanting to hear the good news of Jesus. These were the Parkari people. They had heard some of the testimonies of the Marwari peoples and wanted to know more about Jesus.

Sagar and Pooja hired busses to go to each of the 157 Marwari villages hoping that the people would get on the bus and ride an hour or two from their village to the Gospel event. They also hired one bus to go to one Parkari village as a seed to see if there would be fruit in the Parkari people.

The crusade was held in May of 2022. Approximately 21,000 people came on the 250 busses that were sent to the 158 villages. Nine thousand eight hundred and fifty of those people responded to the Gospel by being born again. The initial count revealed well over 1000 people were healed of sickness and diseases and delivered from demons. We continue to receive new testimonies from that crusade.

Sagar and Puja then hired 10 leaders to go to the new villages and sow wells, meet the new believers, and to disciple them using the T4T model. These 10 leaders were given motorcycles to help with travel and each took a volunteer to train them to leadership.

The Parkari village is one of the villages they have been able to go to since the crusade for the purpose of encouraging the believers, commissioning them with the

Gospel, and setting up discipleship groups. While the leader and his volunteer were in the Parkari village a witch was delivered of demons and confessed Jesus as Lord. The leaders also heard testimony from the people who had come to the big Gospel event in May. The people had been born again and had since been sharing the testimony of Jesus with the other Parkari people. They had been sharing that Jesus does not charge for miracles or healing, that Jesus loves us, and that Jesus is a better God than all their previous gods. There are now 91 Parkari villages that are asking to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sagar and Pooja had an encounter with God. They obeyed by going to the people God had called them to go to. They then sowed the Gospel and other resources into the people. This opened the door to ongoing relationships and to ongoing discipleship. Sagar and Pooja became the catalyst for those people to have an encounter with God. They continue to be a part of commissioning the Marwari people and now the Parkari people to Go, Sow, Build Relationships, and Disciple others!

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